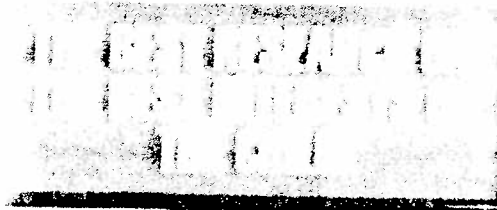


Research and Facts on Equal Parenting Proving it is Far Superior for Children



A CONVERSION FOR PARENTS
WITH
DR. WARREN FARRELL
ON THE BEST OUTCOMES IN DIVORCE



We have now known as a society for almost two decades that children of divorce do better when the divorced parents share custody. In fact they do enormously better. This is not 10% or 20% or even 50% better but by some measures a factor of twenty.

The social pathologies caused by fatherlessness, which is encouraged by federal incentives, and hence by state courts are robbing our children of opportunity and filling our jails and mental institutions unnecessarily. This is a hidden holocaust. Why? Because the legal and government systems built over the last several decades and related services are making too much money to change. We are funding the demise of the family and our children for the self interests of government officials and lawyers.

We must reform this system and pass a presumption of equal parenting in all states as soon as possible thousands of children are being harmed daily. It is simple scientific fact.

Voters Have Had Enough!

85% of Massachusetts Voters Recently Voted For Shared Parenting!

November 2006

For more information call (508) 381-1450

Fatherless Homes Now Proven Beyond Doubt Harmful To Children

Children from fatherless homes are*:

- 15.3 times more likely to have behavioral disorders
- 4.6 times more likely to commit suicide
- 6.6 times more likely to become teenaged mothers
- 24.3 times more likely to run away
- 15.3 times more likely to have behavioral disorders
- 6.3 times more likely to be in a state-operated institutions
- 10.8 times more likely to commit rape
- 6.6 times more likely to drop out of school
- 15.3 times more likely to end up in prison while a teenage
- 73% of adolescent murderers come from mother only homes
- 6.3 times more likely to be in state operated institutions

Daughters who live in mother only homes are 92% more likely to divorce**

The net effect is that we are damaging an entire generation of children for the financial benefit of lawyers and judges.

* Most statistics from a 1999 report of the Department of Health and Human Services. **See the book Father and Child Reunion for more scientific studies and proof.

More Statistics on Fatherlessness

CHILDREN NEED BOTH PARENTS

It's a Fact

Here's why:

- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes. (Source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census).
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.
- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes. (Source: Center for Disease Control).
- 80% of rapist motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes. (Source: Criminal Justice and Behavior, Vol. 14, pp. 403-26).
- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. (Source: National Principals Assoc. Report on the State of High Schools).
- 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in a fatherless home. (Source: Fulton County Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. Of Corrections, 1992).

These statistics translate to mean that children from fatherless homes are:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- 32 times more likely to run away
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders
- 14 times more likely to commit rape
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison

"There is a fundamental liberty right guaranteed to both parents by the 14th Amendment. This is the right to the care, custody, and nurture of their children. According to the Supreme Court of the United States: "Absent a Compelling State Interest of harm or potential harm to the child, the State may not intervene in the privacy of family life.""

Overall, research studies show that children of joint custodians are better adjusted than children of sole custodians on each of the following measures: general adjustment; family relations; self-esteem; emotional adjustment; behavioral adjustment; and divorce-specific adjustment.

Another benefit of Joint Physical Custody is that it improves child support compliance. Researchers have found a positive correlation between the frequency of a parent's contact with a child and the payment of child support. That is to say, the more frequent, regular and flexible the time a parent is permitted to spend with his child, the more likely he is to meet his child support obligation in full

and on time. In terms of voluntary compliance, fathers who have little or no contact with their children after a divorce pay only about 34% of their child support, while fathers with regular contact pay 85% or more of theirs.

Bauserman Study on Joint Custody

New Hampshire Report On Child Support and Custody

Children and Single Moms

Whether it is caused by violence or not, children living with single moms don't do well in our society. It used to be the exception. Now it is becoming the rule and progressively worse. Is that not child abuse too?

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES

Problem	Single-Mother Family		Two Parent Family		Relative Odds ¹
	%	(n) ²	%	(n) ²	
Hyperactivity	15.6	(69,480)	9.6	(221,573)	1.74
Conduct disorder	17.2	(73,659)	8.1	(180,786)	2.36
Emotional disorder	15.0	(67,205)	7.5	(173,714)	2.18
One or more behaviour problems	31.7	(137,460)	18.7	(418,894)	2.02
Repeated a grade ³	11.2	(36,288)	4.7	(78,026)	2.56
Current school problems ³	5.8	(18,862)	2.7	(46,120)	2.22
Social impairment	6.1	(25,105)	2.5	(51,344)	2.53
One or more total problems ³	40.6	(128,895)	23.6	(381,715)	2.21

1. Children from single-mother families are 2.21 times (221%) as likely to have one or more total problems than those from two-parent families, twice as likely to have an emotional disorder, etc. (The probability of this being due to chance is smaller than 1 in 1,000)
2. Weighted projections to reflect national population of children.
3. Data for items so annotated apply for 6- to 11-year-olds only. All other data in the table apply to 4- to 11-year olds.

[Source: **GROWING UP IN CANADA**, National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (Human Resources Development Canada, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-550-MPE, no.1, November 1996, p. 91) Available from StatCan. It is only available in hard copy. \$25 +GST)]

- In 2003, 20,952 entries for divorce were filed in Massachusetts courts!
- In Massachusetts over 40,000 restraining orders are issued each year! This 33 times more than in Virginia with a similar population!
- This has become a HUGE profit making endeavor for lawyers and many others. It is all driven by the greed and desire for power of special interest groups like lawyers and radical feminists who push one way laws.
- Allegations of family violence are the weapon-of-choice in divorce strategies. Lawyers, and paralegals in women's shelters, call them "The Silver Bullet". False abuse allegations work effectively in removing men from their families without due process. The impact that the removal of fathers has on our children is horrific.
- Massachusetts has the HIGHEST child support in the entire U.S. at about 40% of after tax income. It is often several times the cost of raising the children. High "child support" causes federal kickbacks that fund courts and snowballs this monster further.
- Most fathers are loving and care deeply for their children and the vast majority pay child support as ordered, even though it is often onerous and places them in poverty.

Shared parenting is best for children

Submitted Tuesday, April 16, 2002

By Pennsylvania attorney Eugene Wrona

Here are some results of studies conducted by competent researchers that substantiate that shared parenting is best for children in most cases. It's a little long, but contains many useful conclusions based on studies of multiple paradigms of families in separate households.

I believe these summaries can be used to persuade politicians to support legislation advancing the mission of CCJ and the rights of children to unfettered access to both parents.

Research on Shared Parenting and Joint Custody

Joint custody and shared parenting (i.e., joint physical and legal custody) have been studied for more than a quarter-century, with the majority of studies indicating significant benefits for children. About a third of existing studies show no difference between joint and sole custody for children's adjustment to divorce. The critical factor appears to be conflict between parents. When parents cooperate and minimize conflict, children do better with shared parenting/joint physical custody. If there is significant conflict between parents, however, shared parenting provides no benefits and children do no better (and no worse) than they do in sole custody. This section summarizes some of the research published in the past decade.

Joint Physical Custody -- Adolescents After Divorce, Buchanan, C., Maccoby, and Dornbusch, Harvard University Press, 1996.

A study of 517 families with children ranging in age from 10.5 years to 18 years, across a four and a half year period. Measures were: assessed depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Children in joint physical custody arrangements were found to have better adjustment on these measures than those in sole custody.

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This study included "forty boys and girls, ages 8 to 12, in attendance at selected private secular and parochial schools in a large Southwestern metropolitan area participated, along with their middle to upper-class parents." The study compared adjustment of children in joint and sole physical custody, controlling for level of conflict

between parents, to determine if parental conflict would be more detrimental to children in joint or sole custody. The author summarized findings as follows: "Overall, no significant difference between joint and sole physical custody groups was found."

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Results showed that misbehavior and "acting out" were more common among sole custody children: "A multiple regression analysis of these data found children in joint custody families had fewer behavioral adjustment problems with externalizing behavior than children in mother custody families." "Regardless of custody arrangement, parents with low self esteem were more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems when predicting the child's overall behavioral adjustment and internalized behavior."

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"Consistent with other studies of joint and sole custody [citations], our joint legal and residential non-custodians were decidedly more involved with their children following divorce than were non-custodians in sole custody arrangements. . . . Lastly, respondents in joint custody arrangements were more apt to perceive their ex-spouse as having a good relationship with the children and to report satisfaction with that person's performance as a parent."

" . . . conflict between divorcing parents in our sample did not appear to worsen as a result of the increased demand for inter-parental cooperation and communication in joint legal or joint residential custody arrangements. To the contrary, parents with sole maternal custody reported the greatest deterioration in the relationships over time."

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This study evaluated children aged 6 to 15 in the areas of locus of control, self-concept, and family relationships. The children were divided into three groups: shared custody, maternal custody, and intact families. Intact family children had averaged higher than divorced family children on self-concept and father relationships, and shared custody children averaged higher than sole custody children in these areas. Intact family children had fewer least-positive responses in all areas than divorced family children, and shared custody children had fewer least-positive responses than sole custody children in all areas except mother relationship. This study indicates that, on average, a two parent intact family is the best arrangement for children, and a shared parenting arrangement is better than a sole custody arrangement, i.e., a two-parent family is better even if parents are divorced.

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This study evaluated children's perceptions of their fathers at least four years post-divorce, comparing joint custody, sole custody and intact families. The subjects were 43 latency-age children: 11 from maternal custody

families, 14 from joint custody families and 18 controls from intact homes.

Results: "There was a significant difference in the perceptions of children in sole and joint custody. Joint custody children reported spending more time with their fathers in child-centered activities, activities which were considered pleasurable and important to children." And: "No differences were found as a function of custody arrangements in children's perceptions of emotional closeness to the father, acceptance by the father, or fathers's potency or activity."

Lerman, Isabel A. "Adjustment of latency age children in joint and single custody arrangements" California School of Professional Psychology, San Diego, 1989

This study evaluated 90 children, aged 7 to 12, divided equally among maternal, joint legal, and joint physical custody groups.

Results showed negative effects for sole custody: "Single custody subjects evidenced greater self-hate and perceived more rejection from their fathers than joint physical custody subjects." Conflict between parents was found to be a significant factor, which may explain the better adjustment for joint physical custody children: "Degree of inter-parental conflict was a significant predictor of child self-hate. Higher conflict was associated with greater self-hate; lower conflict was associated with lower self-hate." "Higher father-child contact was associated with better adjustment, lower self-hate, and lower perceived rejection from father; lower father-child contact was associated with poorer adjustment, higher self-hate, and higher perceived rejection from father. "

Extreme Situations

In situations with high levels of conflict, mental illness, or domestic violence, joint physical custody is no better (and no worse) than sole custody.

Surviving the Breakup, J. Wallerstein and J. Kelly; Second Chances, J. Wallerstein and S. Blakeslee; and other publications.

Judith Wallerstein and colleagues have produced many publications on a 20+ year study of 184 families that had been referred to her clinic for therapy. The parents were predominantly mentally ill, with approximately half the men and half the women "moderately disturbed or frequently incapacitated by disabling neuroses and addictions," including some who were "sometimes suicidal." An additional 20% of the women and 15% of the men were categorized as "severely disturbed." Approximately one third of the sample were considered to have "adequate psychological functioning" before divorce. Although there was a significant level of attrition, with families dropping out of the study when problems were resolved, some conclusions emerged from the remaining families. Children in joint custody situations did no better than those in sole custody, indicating that parents must be reasonably psychologically healthy for shared parenting to benefit children.

Johnston, Janet R., Marsha Kline, and Jeanne M. Tschann, "Ongoing Postdivorce Conflict: Effects on Children of Joint Custody and Frequent Access," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct. 1989).

Johnston et al. studied 100 low income families involved in ongoing custody disputes that included frequent verbal and physical aggression. Approximately one third of the children were in joint physical custody arrangements averaging 12 days per month with the less-seen parent, with the others in either mother or father sole physical custody averaging 4 days a month with the less-seen parent. The study found that "there was no clear evidence that children are better adjusted in either custody type", and that "mean scores for the Child Behavior Checklist lie within the normal range for all custody types." Also, "there was no evidence that the

clinically disturbed children were more likely to be in joint than in sole custody." However, the study did find that more frequent contact between parents in either joint or sole custody arrangements was "associated with more emotional and behavioral problems in the children."

Johnston's study indicates that shared parenting may not reduce disputes between parents in extreme high-conflict situations, but also shows that sole custody does not protect children from the effects of conflict between parents. In high conflict situations, it is probably better to reduce interaction between parents. For example, parents can pick up children from school instead of from the other parent's house.

The study did find one significant benefit from shared parenting even in these cases: "Only one parent with joint custody ceased contact with her child, whereas 12 parents of sole custody children 'dropped out'." Thus joint custody does appear to protect children from the complete loss of a parent, even in high conflict situations.

Joint Legal Custody

Although not as beneficial to children as equal shared parenting (joint physical custody), joint legal custody helps to some extent. The main benefits of joint legal custody are in reducing visitation interference and improving child support compliance.

Joint legal custody has been consistently linked with more parental involvement, higher child support compliance, and less conflict between parents. Until recently, however, it was not clear whether these benefits occurred as a result of joint legal custody, or simply because more cooperative parents chose joint custody in the first place. The 1997 study by Seltzer provides strong evidence for a cause and effect relationship between joint legal custody and the benefits associated with it.

Seltzer, J. "Father by Law: Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Non-residential Fathers Involvement with Children," NSFH Paper No. 75, Feb., 1997, U. of Wisconsin-Madison,
<http://ssc.wisc.edu/cde/nsfhw/home.htm>

Seltzer used data from the National Survey of Families and Households, a survey of over 13,000 families that collected data in two waves, 1987-88 and 1992-94. Because the study included data on the quality of family relationships, it was possible to study the effects of joint legal custody while controlling from pre-separation family relationships by analyzing data on families that had separated between the survey waves.

Seltzer concluded that "Controlling for the quality of family relationships before separation and socioeconomic status, fathers with joint legal custody see their children more frequently, have more overnight visits, and pay more child support than fathers in families in which mothers have sole legal custody." She suggests that joint legal custody helps reduce visitation denial: "By clarifying that divorced fathers are 'by law' still fathers, parents' negotiations about fathers' participation in child rearing after divorce may shift from trying to resolve whether fathers will be involved in child rearing to the matter of how fathers will be involved." [emphasis in original]

Gunnoe, M.L., and S.L. Braver, "The Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Family Functioning, Controlling for Factors that Predispose a joint award," Child Development.

This study evaluated 273 families, controlling for 28 variables that influence a predisposition to agree on joint legal custody. Controlling for these factors, children in joint legal custody families had more time with their fathers and fewer adjustment and behavior problems. The custody type, however, did not affect the adjustment of fathers or mothers post-divorce, conflict between ex-spouses, or child support compliance.

Sanford Braver, "Determining the Impact of Joint Custody on Divorcing Families",

Study consisted of 378 families; some with unmatched partners, in various custody arrangements.

". . .Sharlene Wolchik, Iwrin Sandler and I found in 1985 that children in joint custody had higher feelings of self-worth than children in sole maternal custody."

"Our results showed considerable benefits for joint custody, even when equating predisposing factors. After this adjustment, children in joint custody were found to be significantly better adjusted, and to exhibit less antisocial and impulsive behavior than sole custody families. Fathers also visited more, and were more involved in child care, as well as more satisfied with the divorce settlement. Mothers, however, were significantly less satisfied with the custody arrangements in joint custody families."

"When the couple disagrees initially, which is better for the family, for the father to get his preference (joint [custody]) or for the mother to get her preference (sole [custody])? We found that the groups differed significantly in terms of how much financial child support was paid: when sole custody was that arrangement despite the fathers' wishes, 80% was paid (according to what the father reported; the figure was 64% by mothers' report), while when joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference, it zoomed to almost perfect compliance (97% by fathers' report; 94% by mothers' report) . . . A similar relationship was found for fathers' contact with the child. It was significantly highest for the group in which joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference." "Joint custody, even when awarded despite the contrary preference of the mother, leads to more involved fathers, and almost perfect of financial child support; controlling for predisposing factors, it leads to better adjusted children. . . We believe these findings call for policy makers, in the best interest of the children, to adopt a presumption that is rebuttable for joint legal custody, that is, a judicial preference that both parents retain their right and responsibilities toward their children post divorce."

CHILDREN LIKELY TO BE BETTER ADJUSTED IN JOINT VS SOLE CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS IN MOST CASES, ACCORDING TO REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Living Situation Not As Influential As Time Spent With Parent

WASHINGTON - Children from divorced families who either live with both parents at different times or spend certain amounts of time with each parent are better adjusted in most cases than children who live and interact with just one parent, according to new research on custody arrangements and children's adjustment.

Psychologist Robert Bauserman, Ph.D., of AIDS Administration/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in Baltimore, Maryland conducted a meta-analysis of 33 studies between 1982 to 1999 that examined 1,846 sole-custody and 814 joint-custody children. The studies compared child adjustment in joint physical or joint legal custody with sole-custody settings and 251 intact families. Joint custody was defined as either physical custody - where a child spends equal or substantial amounts of time with both parents or shared legal custody - where a child lives with primarily one parent but both parents are involved in all aspects of the child's life. This article will appear in the March issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Children in joint custody arrangements had less behavior and emotional problems, had higher self-esteem, better family relations and school performance than children in sole custody arrangements. And these children were as well-adjusted as intact family children on the same measures, said Bauserman, "probably because joint custody provides the child with an opportunity to have ongoing contact with both parents." These findings indicate that children do not actually need to be in a joint *physical* custody to show better adjustment but just need to spend substantial time with both parents, especially with their fathers, said Bauserman. Also, joint custody couples reported less conflict, possibly because both parents could participate in their children's lives equally and not spend the time arguing over childcare decisions. Unfortunately a perception exists that joint custody is more harmful because it exposes children to ongoing parental conflict. In fact, the studies in this review found that sole-custody parents reported higher levels of conflict.

It is important to recognize that the results do not support joint custody in all situations. When one parent is abusive or neglectful or has a serious mental or physical health problem, sole-custody with the other parent would clearly be preferable, said Bauserman. The judges, lawyers, social workers, psychologists and other professionals involved in divorce counseling and litigation should be aware of these findings to make informed decisions of what environment is best for a child in a custody situation. Furthermore, to address the question of how much the parents' emotional health compared with the custody arrangement influenced the children's adjustment, Bauserman explained that custody arrangement seemed to have more influence. ***By statistically controlling for past parental conflict (which indicates parental maladjustment), the joint custody children still were significantly better adjusted.*** This result was also found

in other studies cited in Bauserman's review. More primary research is needed, said Bauserman, "on the past and current adjustment of joint custody and sole custody parents before this question can be completely answered." **Article:** "Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review," Robert Bauserman, Ph.D., AIDS Administration/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; *Journal of Family Psychology*, Vol 16, No. 1.

Full text of the article is available from the APA Public Affairs Office or http://www.apa.org/journals/fam/press_releases/march_2002/fam16191.html

Robert Bauserman, PhD can be reached by telephone at 410-767-4322

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 155,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 53 sub fields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

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This study evaluated 90 children, aged 7 to 12, divided equally among maternal, joint legal, and joint physical custody groups. Results showed negative effects for sole custody: "Single custody subjects evidenced greater self-hate and perceived more rejection from their fathers than joint physical custody subjects." Conflict between parents was found to be a significant factor, which may explain the better adjustment for joint physical custody children: "Degree of interparental conflict was a significant predictor of child self-hate. Higher conflict was associated with greater self-hate; lower conflict was associated with lower self-hate." "Higher father-child contact was associated with better adjustment, lower self-hate, and lower perceived rejection from father; lower father-child contact was associated with poorer adjustment, higher self-hate, and higher perceived rejection from father. "

Extreme Situations In situations with high levels of conflict, mental illness, or domestic violence, joint physical custody is no better (and no worse) than sole custody. Surviving the Breakup, J. Wallerstein and J. Kelly; Second Chances, J. Wallerstein and S. Blakeslee; and other publications. Judith Wallerstein and colleagues have produced many publications on a 20+ year study of 184 families that had been referred to her clinic for therapy. The parents were predominantly mentally ill, with approximately half the men and half the women "moderately disturbed or frequently incapacitated by disabling neuroses and addictions," including some who were "sometimes suicidal." An additional 20% of the women and 15% of the men were categorized as "severely disturbed." Approximately one third of the sample were considered to have "adequate psychological functioning" before divorce. Although there was a significant level of attrition, with families dropping out of the study when problems were resolved, some conclusions emerged from the remaining families. Children in joint custody situations did no better than those in sole custody, indicating that parents must be reasonably psychologically healthy for shared parenting to benefit children. Johnston, Janet R., Marsha Kline, and Jeanne M. Tschann, "Ongoing Post divorce Conflict: Effects on Children of Joint Custody and Frequent Access," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct. 1989). Johnston et al. studied 100 low income families involved in ongoing custody disputes that included frequent verbal and physical aggression. Approximately one third of the children were in joint physical custody arrangements averaging 12 days per month with the less-seen parent, with the others in either mother or father sole physical custody averaging 4 days a month with the less-seen parent. The study found that "there was no clear evidence that children are better adjusted in either custody type", and that "mean scores for the Child Behavior Checklist lie within the normal range for all custody types." Also, "there was no evidence that the clinically disturbed children were more likely to be in joint than in sole custody." ***However, the study did find that more frequent contact between parents in either joint or sole custody arrangements was "associated with more emotional and behavioral problems in the children."***

Johnston's study indicates that shared parenting may not reduce disputes between parents in extreme high-conflict situations, but also shows that sole custody does not protect children from the effects of conflict between parents.

In high conflict situations, it is probably better to reduce interaction Between parents. ***For example, parents can pick up children from school instead of from the other parent's house.*** The study did find one significant benefit from shared parenting even in these cases: "Only one parent with joint custody ceased contact with her child, whereas 12 parents of sole custody children 'dropped out'." Thus joint custody does appear to protect children from the complete loss of a parent, even in high conflict situations.

Joint Legal Custody

Although not as beneficial to children as equal shared parenting (joint

physical custody), joint legal custody helps to some extent. The main benefits of joint legal custody are in reducing visitation interference and improving child support compliance. Joint legal custody has been consistently linked with more parental involvement, higher child support compliance, and less conflict between parents. Until recently, however, it was not clear whether these benefits occurred as a result of joint legal custody, or simply because more cooperative parents chose joint custody in the first place. The 1997 study by Seltzer provides strong evidence for a cause and effect relationship between joint legal custody and the benefits associated with it.

*Seltzer, J. "**Father by Law: Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Non-residential Fathers Involvement with Children.**" NSFH Paper No. 75, Feb., 1997, U. of Wisconsin-Madison, <http://ssc.wisc.edu/cde/nsfhwf/home.htm>*

Seltzer used data from the National Survey of Families and Households, a survey of over 13,000 families that collected data in two waves, 1987-88 and 1992-94. Because the study included data on the quality of family relationships, it was possible to study the effects of joint legal custody while controlling from pre-separation family relationships by analyzing data on families that had separated between the survey waves. Seltzer concluded that "Controlling for the quality of family relationships before separation and socioeconomic status, fathers with joint legal custody see their children more frequently, have more overnight visits, and pay more child support than fathers in families in which mothers have sole legal custody." She suggests that joint legal custody helps reduce visitation denial: "By clarifying that divorced fathers are 'by law' still fathers, parents' negotiations about fathers' participation in child rearing after divorce may shift from trying to resolve whether fathers will be involved in child rearing to the matter of how fathers will be involved." [emphasis in original]

*Gunnoe, M.L., and S.L. Braver, "**The Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Functioning, Controlling for Factors that Predispose a joint award,**" Child Development.*

This study evaluated 273 families, controlling for 28 variables that influence a predisposition to agree on joint legal custody. Controlling for these factors, children in joint legal custody families had more time with their fathers and fewer adjustment and behavior problems. The custody type, however, did not affect the adjustment of fathers or mothers post-divorce, conflict between ex-spouses, or child support compliance.

Sanford Braver," Determining the Impact of Joint Custody on Divorcing Families", Study consisted of 378 families; some with unmatched partners, in various custody arrangements. ". . . Sharlene Wolchik, Iwrin Sandler and I found in 1985 that children in joint custody had higher feelings of self-worth than children in sole maternal custody." "Our results showed considerable benefits for joint custody, even when equating predisposing factors. After this adjustment, children in joint custody were found to be significantly better adjusted, and to exhibit less antisocial and impulsive behavior than sole custody families. Fathers also visited more, and were more involved in

child care, as well as more satisfied with the divorce settlement. Mothers, however, were significantly less satisfied with the custody arrangements in joint custody families."

"When the couple disagrees initially, which is better for the family, for the father to get his preference (joint [custody]) or for the mother to get her preference (sole [custody])? We found that the groups differed significantly in terms of how much financial child support was paid: when sole custody was that arrangement despite the fathers' wishes, 80% was paid (according to what the father reported; the figure was 64% by mothers' report), while when joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference, it zoomed to almost perfect compliance (97% by fathers' report; 94% by mothers' report) . . . A similar relationship was found for fathers' contact with the child. It was significantly highest for the group in which joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference." "Joint custody, even when awarded despite the contrary preference of the mother, leads to more involved fathers, and almost perfect of financial child support; controlling for predisposing factors, it leads to better adjusted children. . . We believe these findings call for policy makers, in the best interest of the children, to adopt a presumption that is rebuttal for joint legal custody, that is, a judicial preference that both parents retain their right and responsibilities toward their children post divorce."



GROWING UP WITH DAD

A comparison of children aged 3–5 years old living with their mothers or their fathers

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After their parents' separation, 6 percent of children aged between 3 and 5 years old in Denmark live with their fathers while 94 percent live with their mothers. In this Danish study two probability samples with an equal number of residential fathers and residential mothers were selected. The research results revealed a close association between strains on parents and the well-being of their children. Parents who were not appreciated at work or unemployed were more likely to have conflicts with their children. Although one-third of the fathers had care of their children because of the mother's death or because the mother was unable to take care of the children, the fathers in the study had better jobs, less unemployment and fewer psychological problems. As a consequence they were less severe with the small children than the mothers.

Theory and themes in the study

It is estimated that about one-third of Danish children will experience the separation of their parents during childhood (Christoffersen, 1995). About 11 percent of these children live with their father after separation, but the proportion of the youngest children who live with their fathers is even lower. Only 6 percent of the 3- to 5-year-olds who live with one parent are living with their fathers, while 94 percent are living with their mother.

The present study¹ compares these two groups of children to answer the following questions. In which respects do the living conditions of children living with their fathers differ from those of children living with their mothers? Also, if there are any differences, what are the most obvious explanations?

In the ongoing debate about the care of children there are two contradictory theoretical perspectives according to Barbara Risman (1986). The first is the individualistic view, which claims the personality traits that

enable mothers to take care of their children are learned during their childhood. According to this perspective adult men have not the capacity, the ability or the motivation to take care of young children.

The other theoretical perspective is more structuralistic. The structural approach rejects the claim that sex roles are internalized as personality traits. In this perspective, fathers are able to adapt and develop the necessary abilities to look after children in an ongoing interactive process.

The study described here focused on different kinds of *actual* constraints and stresses on lone parents.² Special interest has been given to working conditions and occupational security. One of the reasons for this is that some Danish studies (e.g. Carlsen and Larsen, 1993) suggest that men's working conditions may make it difficult for them to reconcile their working life and their life as single fathers. Cultural norms may not be flexible enough and role expectations may demand that men give priority to work and not to the family. The reconciliation of work and family life for single fathers and mothers therefore was given particular attention in this study.

Methods

Approximately two equally large probability samples of children aged between 3 and 5 years old living with their fathers and mothers were drawn from national records (i.e. the personal identity register). Interviews were obtained with about 89 percent of the sample. A total of 1010 parents were interviewed by trained staff from the Danish National Institute of Social Research on the basis of standardized questionnaires.³ Thus, 478 fathers and 532 mothers were interviewed either by phone or face-to-face interviews at home.

Since the study was a cross-sectional survey on nationwide samples, it suffers from well-known weaknesses in determining cause and effect. In some medical research randomized experiments are used to test the influence of drugs and hospital routines. These methods are not available, for obvious reasons, in most social science research settings. Compensatory, logistic regression models are therefore used to control for influential confounding factors. These methods are described by Hosmer and Lemeshow (1989).

Since the decision about who is going to have custody of the child cannot be made at random, particular attention has been given to fathers who became single parents due to necessity through the death of the mother or because she was unable to take care of the child because of psychiatric illness, alcoholism, imprisonment, etc. In such cases, did the economic, social or psychological circumstances of childhood differ in form from those of other single-father families? For that reason, becoming a single parent by necessity was incorporated in the models as a possible confounding factor along with other factors.

Research results: stresses on parents and constraints on the children

One of the most striking results of the research was the close association between parental stress⁴ and constraints on the children – regardless of whether children were living with fathers or mothers. Parents were asked 12 questions about the well-being of their children. For every single one of the 12 questions, a stark association with the parental psychosomatic stress symptoms was found (Table 1).

About half of the parents had one or more symptoms either on a daily or weekly basis. In these cases relatively higher frequencies of anxiety, nightmares, psychosomatic symptoms (e.g. headaches, stomach aches) and conflicts with associates (parents or playmates) were found among their children. In addition, their children were more often isolated, lacked self-confidence, had great difficulty concentrating and were easily offended by reprimands.

Table 1 Psychosomatic problems of the parent and well-being of the child

	<i>One or more psychosomatic symptoms (%)</i>	<i>No psychosomatic symptoms (%)</i>	<i>p Fisher's test</i>
1. Child often suffers from nightmare	13	6	< .0005
2. Child often has anxiety attacks	4	1	< .0025
3. Child often suffers from stomach aches	14	8	< .006
4. Child often suffers from headaches	6	2	< .0004
5. Does the child often bite or scratch other children?	12	5	< .0001
6. Does the child often lack self-confidence?	17	8	< .0001
7. Does the child often have difficulties in concentrating?	30	15	< .0001
8. Does the child often burst into rages?	39	21	< .0001
9. Does the child lack playmates?	23	15	< .001
10. Does the child often feel lonely?	11	5	< .0007
11. Is the child sensitive to criticism or reprimands?	60	45	< .0001
12. Is the child bullied by other children?	10	3	< .0001
Number of parents interviewed	545	465	1010

Note: Symptoms of parental stress are daily or weekly experience of one or more of the following: burning or pressing pains in the upper stomach, headaches, feelings of being overwhelmed, feeling nervous and unbalanced, often feeling depressed, sad or edgy for no apparent reason.

To evaluate differences of dichotomous data between two independent samples (in this case proportions of children's negative well-being indicators among parents with and without psychosomatic symptoms), Fisher's exact probability test is used (Siegel, 1956). *p* is level of significance (see also Table 4).

An explanation could well be that even very young children are sensitive to and dependent on the emotional state of their parents – in particular when they are living with only one of their parents. They have to construct a system or frame of reference to predict and understand the emotional fluctuations of their parents – including both expressed and hidden feelings. Children become specialists in decoding the emotional climate in their own families (Harris, 1994).

From other studies evidence was found that children will also be put under pressure if they are entrusted with too much responsibility, for instance when single mothers confide in their children their financial problems (McLoyd and Wilson, 1990).

At the same time the results from the present study need careful control for potential confounders. For instance, there is evidence that parents' own psychological functioning influences their perceptions of the child's functioning.

To be appreciated at work – or unemployed

An initial assumption might be that a high degree of challenge and stimulation at work would mean that parents felt torn between the requirements of the job and consideration for their children.

Contrary to expectations, however, several studies show that complexity of work, challenges and stimulation have a positive influence on parenting, e.g. less harsh discipline, more warmth and responsiveness. Influence at work, job autonomy or self-direction make a unique, positive contribution to parental warmth and responsiveness to the children (Greenberger et al., 1994).

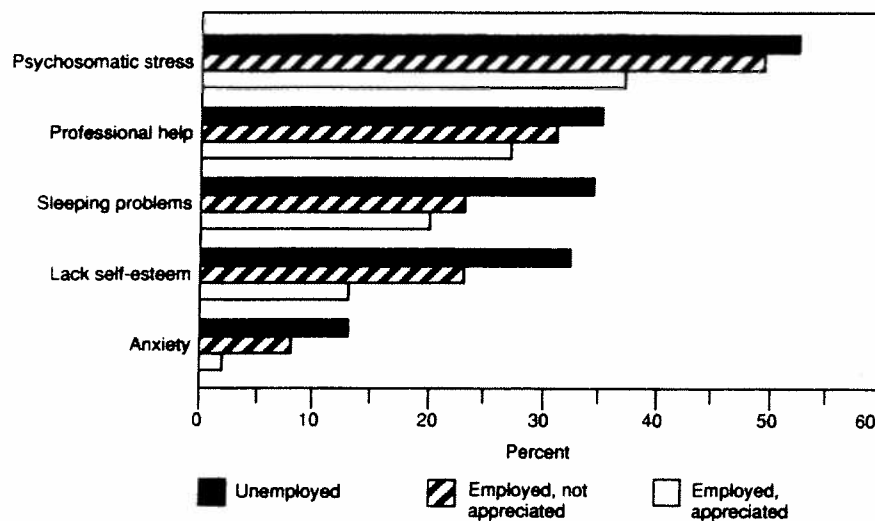
A Danish study of the developmental aspects of work was recently carried out. Employees' working environment and the influence of work on health and reactions to stress were analysed. As opposed to repetitive and monotonous work, the opportunity for autonomy, education and social support from colleagues and superiors was negatively associated with psychosomatic symptoms (Thaulow, 1994).

Using questions from Thaulow's study, the relationships between adults' work and their parenting behaviour were studied in the present interview survey of mothers and fathers of children aged 3–5 years old.

The question was whether challenging jobs that are engrossing and gratifying tend to distance parents from their children or whether they tend to promote greater warmth and better moods which spill over and have positive effects on parenting.

The research results showed that parents who felt appreciated at work had fewer psychosomatic stress reactions, fewer psychological problems (sleeping problems, anxiety attacks) and higher self-esteem (Figure 1). The worst off fathers and mothers were the unemployed parents. These parents

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Note: Professional help was delimited to professional help for psychiatric problems from their own doctor, psychiatrist or in hospital, etc.

Figure 1 Percentage of unemployed parents, or employed parents appreciated or not appreciated at work with various psychological problems

had more often had professional help for psychiatric problems from their own doctor, psychiatrist or in hospital, etc. Several previous studies also support the findings that unemployment is stressful for parents and has an adverse effect on their children (Christoffersen, 1994, 1996a).

Other things being equal, the mothers had more psychosomatic stress symptoms than the fathers. When gender was taken into account, having a relationship with the other parent burdened by conflict would give some prognostic information to predict psychosomatic stress symptoms. While negative reactions from associates when the parent explains that they are a single parent would add more prognostic information. Likewise, lack of self-esteem was associated to psychosomatic symptoms, other things being equal (Table 2).

Parents who felt appreciated at work were less punitive towards their children compared to other parents and especially in comparison with unemployed parents, all other things being equal, as shown by the logistic regression analysis (Table 3). But work conditions were only one among other influential factors leading to more frequent conflict between parent and child. The youngest children in the samples (3 years of age) were more frequently exposed to punishments than the older children (4–5 years old).

Only the parent living with the child was interviewed. If the non-residential parent was a source of support (e.g. lived within 15 minutes away or

Table 2 Psychosomatic symptoms of the parent and background conditions

	<i>Odds ratio</i>	<i>Confidence interval 95%</i>	<i>p level of significance</i>
1. Women	1.56	(1.18–2.06)	< .002
2. Unemployed or not appreciated at work	1.38	(1.03–1.84)	< .03
3. A conflictual relationship with the other parent	1.81	(1.20–2.73)	< .005
4. Negative reactions of associates	2.41	(1.63–3.57)	< .0001
5. Often feel a lack of self-esteem	3.67	(2.61–5.15)	< .0001

Note: A stepwise logistic regression revealed the above variables as the best prognostic information to predict parental psychosomatic stress symptoms.

Table 3 Psychosomatic and social background for frequent punishment of 3- to 5-year-old children

	<i>Odds ratio</i>	<i>Confidence interval 95%</i>	<i>p level of significance</i>
1. Psychosomatic stress symptoms	1.90	(1.39–2.61)	< .0001
2. Not joint custody	1.66	(1.21–2.28)	< .002
3. Unemployed or not appreciated at work	1.50	(1.04–2.17)	< .03
4. Transportation to the other parent takes less than 15 minutes	0.70	(0.50–0.97)	< .03
5. The child was 3 years old	2.27	(1.60–3.22)	< .0001

Note: A stepwise logistic regression revealed the above variables as the best prognostic information to predict frequent punishment of 3- to 5-year-old children.

the parents had joint custody), then the incidence of punishments was less frequent. The conclusions were that constraints on the single parents were associated with a higher incidence of conflicts which led to punishment of the child. When the above-mentioned constraints were taken into considerations, no differences were found between mothers and fathers.

Fathers were less harsh in punishment and made fewer disciplinary efforts than the mothers. One of the reasons for this was that fathers were far more appreciated at work, had fewer psychosomatic stress reactions, fewer psychological problems and higher self-esteem. The residential fathers had joint custody more often than the residential mothers. Other reasons were that fathers had far better and more challenging jobs, and were basically in far more gratifying situations (Table 4).

Table 4 Separated fathers and mothers living with a child aged 3–5

	<i>Fathers (%)</i>	<i>Mothers (%)</i>	<i>p</i>
A. Social background			
1. The other parent is dead	14	2	< .0001
2. The other parent is unable to care for the child (disappeared, ill, in prison, brutal or mentally ill)	19	20	–
3. Parent has no professional training	34	42	< .008
4. Parent has yearly income < 200,000 kr	46	83	< .0001
5. Parent is unemployed	20	30	< .0003
B. Personal problems			
6. Lacking self-esteem	9	17	< .0001
7. Psychiatric problems ^c	40	52	< .0001
8. Psychosomatic stress symptoms ^a	37	54	< .0001
C. Conflict/cooperation			
9. Parental relations burdened by conflict ^a	19	19	–
10. Child has joint-visiting (14–16 nights per month) ^b	16	4	< .0001
11. Joint custody ^b	59	38	< .0001
12. Child has no contact with other parent ^b	6	14	< .0001
13. No contact with ex-parents-in-law	17	26	< .002
D. Well-being of the child			
14. Child has been corporally punished at least once ^c	61	73	< .0001
15. Weekly punishments ^c	17	24	< .015
16. Child often bursts into rages	24	34	< .0009
E. Reactions of the surroundings			
17. Negative reactions	8	20	< .0001
18. Positive reactions	71	33	< .0001
Number of parents interviewed	478	532	1010

^aOnly parents with contact.^bWidowers not included.^cThe child was rapped on the knuckles, was smacked on the bottom, or boxed on the ear.^dOne or more of the following happen weekly or more often: the child was physically chastised (see above); the child was sent to his room; or the child was shaken.^eThe measures of parental psychosomatic stress were daily or weekly problems with one or more of the following symptoms: burning pressing pains in the upper stomach, headaches, feelings of being overwhelmed, feeling nervous and unbalanced, often feeling depressed, sad or edgy for no apparent reason.^fThe parent has had professional help for psychiatric problems from their own doctor, psychiatrist, or in hospital, etc.

Unemployment among single parents

A relatively large proportion of single parents are unemployed. Using surveys of cross-sectional national samples, it was found that in 1974 11 percent of single parents with dependent children (i.e. children under 18) were unemployed. By 1994 about 30 percent of single parents were unemployed (Christoffersen, 1996b).

There might be several different explanations for this. First, it seems to be confirmed that unemployment – of fathers in particular – increases the risk of family dissolution. Unemployment might be one factor among others which causes divorce (Christoffersen, 1996a). Second, single parenthood might itself increase the risk of unemployment, because of the decreased number of jobs available for single parents. The growth of more atypical work arrangements such as shift work, night work or weekend work (Danmarks Statistik, 1996) has been problematic, especially for single parents.

A further obstacle for single parents seeking employment is the opening hours of public daycare centres and the lack of universal provision of public daycare for preschool children. The present study of single-parent families with children aged 3–5 years old found that a third of the families experienced difficulties because of opening hours in daycare centres.

Nevertheless, single working parents are given preference: surveys conducted in 1975, 1981 and 1989 confirmed that being a single working mother was a significant factor predicting the use of care in public daycare, e.g. creches and kindergartens (Bertelsen and Linde, 1985; Bertelsen, 1991). Preference is also given to families with an apparent need, e.g. children in need of daycare due to social or educational reasons (Koch-Nielsen, 1996).

Finally, the tax system in combination with social security benefits allocated to one-parent families (e.g. supplementary children's allowance, housing benefits) seem to make paid jobs less attractive to low-skilled, one-parent families. Calculations⁷ on the basis of cross-sectional interview surveys combined with income information, revealed that a relatively high proportion of single mothers in paid work obtained *as much as or less than* unemployment benefits (Pedersen and Smith, 1995a, 1995b).

However, they were still working. The reason might be that in the long-term they may obtain a positive surplus from paid work and they may feel it would be too risky to withdraw from the labour market (Pedersen and Ploug, 1993). In addition, unemployment might cause social isolation and a feeling of ostracization.

It is remarkable that only a few fathers in two-parent families with preschool children are unemployed, while one in five of the single fathers in the present study were unemployed. About 30 percent of the single mothers in the study were unemployed. As to why the unemployment rate among single mothers is significantly higher, the explanation might be that fathers are more likely to have a vocational training and have undergone lengthier

training than single mothers. It is no wonder that single-father families are generally far more resourceful than single-mother families.

Are mothers always the best parents?

Concerning professional training, income level, job security and personal problems, fathers were in a relatively better position than mothers (Table 4). If the factors behind psychosomatic stress (Table 2) or the factors behind frequent punishment of the children are considered (Table 3), then children living with their fathers were in a better position than those living with their mother. Children's social networks were more likely to be intact when they lived with their father. They were more likely to be in joint custody, had more frequent contact with the non-residential parent and were less likely to have lost contact with grandparents for various reasons (Table 4).

Besides, single fathers are more likely to receive positive reactions from people whom they meet for the first time. This forms a glaring contrast to the reactions which follow when single mothers explain that they are a single parent. Most of the fathers (71 percent) have experienced such a positive reaction not once but on several occasions, in contrast to 33 percent among the single mothers (Table 4).

This also reflects the role expectations of women and men in society. The positive reactions disclose that people do not expect fathers to be able to take care of their children. In this way prejudices against fathers in general are revealed.

Discussion

Since fathers are not randomly allocated to be residential or non-residential fathers when families dissolve there will always be some selectional bias. A cross-sectional survey of single fathers, such as the present study, will encounter difficulties in generalizing these results to non-residential fathers. We cannot know – and we will never know – how the non-residential fathers would have coped if they had been living with their children as single fathers.

An insufficient method is to study the fathers who became single fathers by necessity, e.g. because of the mother's death or because the mother was unable to take care of their child because of alcoholism, psychiatric illness, imprisonment, etc. Fathers who became single fathers for these tragic reasons managed to take care of their children just as well as the other single fathers and generally better than single mothers in the same situation. The study found no income differences between the single fathers and the non-residential fathers in the sample.

In focusing on the selection bias between non-residential fathers and

residential fathers a potentially important selection process may be overlooked: the selection process between men who become fathers and men who remain childless. It seems as if the men – as opposed to the women – were chosen to be fathers because of their work abilities. Furthermore, it may be that quality employment is far more decisive for the well-being of those in one-parent families.

In several studies striking differences were found between single men and married men. Married men were more likely to have better socioeconomic conditions (education, income, professional, managerial or official occupation), and their mental and physical health were overall better than the single men (Bernard, 1972).

These overwhelming differences could be the result of a selection process, but Jessie Bernard gives an alternative explanation: marriage itself produces these differences. Contrary to women, men benefit from marriage.

The selection assumption emphasizes processes which facilitate men and women in different ways in entering the marriage and leaving the family. Accordingly, Hans Hallberg (1991) finds poor mental and physical health, and a higher mortality, among divorced middle-aged Swedish men. Divorced Swedish men are especially overrepresented when it comes to alcohol-related conditions, suicidal actions and accidents.

Marriage within the same social class

Studies of other European and Asian cultures have found that social distance between classes is maintained through different kinds of restrictions. Although there may be formal freedom of movement between classes, there are effective social barriers between the social classes which prevent marriages between classes (Goody, 1976).

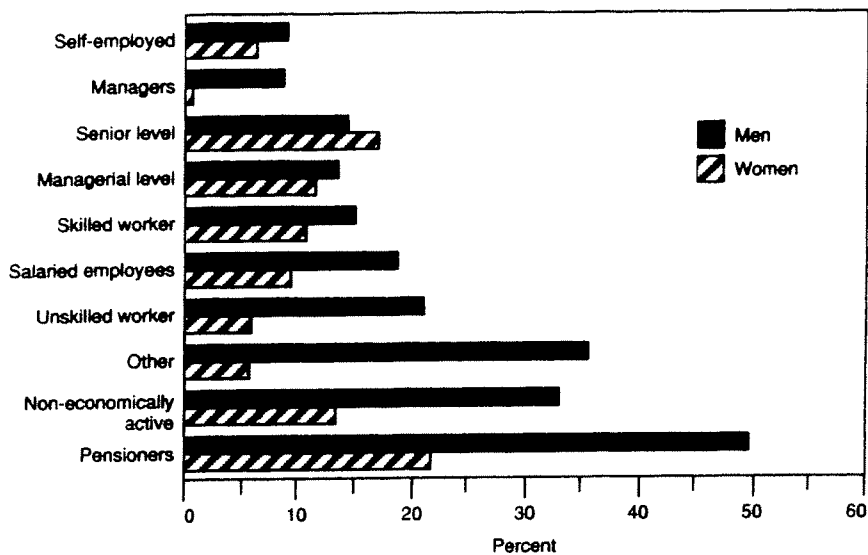
Danish studies of family formation indicate the effects of such social barriers. The longitudinal study of the 1954 birth cohort reveals that the formation of couples mainly takes place between partners who have approximately the same level of education (Hansen, 1995, 1996).

Marginalized men remain childless

The distribution of biological parenthood over the past century shows that more women than men become parents. The number of children in families has decreased during the last 30 years. The net reproduction rate has been below the reproduction level for the last 25 years. Nevertheless, most women (about 90 percent) become mothers, and many men (about 80 percent) become fathers. The proportion of childless men aged 37 increased during the 1980s from 18.1 to 23.0 percent. In the same period the percentage of women with no children at the age of 35 increased from 10.7 to 15.0 percent. These data come from a longitudinal register-based study of the total population during the 1980s (Knudsen, 1993).

For men economic activities are associated with parenthood. Not all

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Source: Danmarks Statistik (1997).

Figure 2 Percentage of childless men and women aged 44 years in 1993 by socioeconomic status

men are able to 'afford' families. In Denmark shifts in family formation patterns can be traced over time from registers of individuals' personal identity numbers. Whether or not parents are married, the newborn children are registered with both the mother's and father's personal identity number. This allows researchers to follow men's parenting trends.

Information from this source shows that unemployed men aged 44 years old are less likely than employed men of the same age to have children (Danmarks Statistik, 1997). Men with self-employed, professional and managerial jobs have high fathering rates. In the 44-year-old age bracket, the lowest rates were found among unskilled workers and especially among the non-economically active or recipients of disability pensions (Figure 2).

Quite the opposite trends were found among the vast majority of women. The higher the socioeconomic level of women in this age group, the higher the rate of childlessness – excluding the few cases of self-employed women, women working as directors, or women at the other end of the spectrum: the non-economically active women.

These results slot in with earlier Danish studies. Men who are unemployed are more likely to be single, while highly educated men are more likely to be in a couple (Knudsen, 1993; Christoffersen, 1993). Similar results were found in a study of the 1954 birth cohort when they were interviewed at 38 years old (Hansen, 1995, 1996). A possible hypothesis is that when a woman chooses a man to be the father of her children, she appears to

prefer a man who has had a longer vocational training period as opposed to one who has no skills.

Income differences between spouses

One of the reasons why we find stark income differences between mothers and fathers in families is first of all because of the relatively large group of marginalized men who never become fathers.

A cross-sectional study revealed that fathers with preschool children⁶ on average earned about 90,000 kroner *more* per year than the mothers (Christoffersen, 1990). A study⁷ of the 1995 birth cohort showed similar large income differences: 80,000 kroner per year.

Attachment to work and problems of gender inequalities

One explanation might be that women choose a father for their children according to social status. The suggestions are that men with power who earn relatively large amounts will find a partner more easily. Men who have access to resources, and consequently to social protection, are more likely to become part of a family in contrast to men who are poor, long-term unemployed and marginalized.

For those reasons, the length of education, length of vocational training and amount of income often make relatively influential differences between parents, and influence care arrangements, e.g. parental leave. The attachment to paid work formed by role expectations within the family and among others may point to different directions for fathers and mothers. Therefore, these studies highlight some of the material obstacles to reducing gender inequality.

Notes

This study has been financially supported by the Danish Equal Status Council and Ministry of Social Affairs.

1. This study has been published in Danish (see Christoffersen, 1996b).
2. Some of the parents were living in reconstituted families at the time of the interview and some children were living with a stepparent or have a stepparent in the visiting home. About as many of the fathers as mothers were living with a new partner (26 percent and 28 percent, respectively). The crucial distinction for the study was that the child was not living with both biological parents. The mean age of the children when the family was dissolved was around 2 years old.
3. We interviewed 79 percent by phone and 21 percent were interviewed at home. A review of the research comparing face-to-face interview methods with telephone interview methods showed some differences in the results of these techniques when sensitive questions dealing with subjects which could be stigmatizing were asked. The interviewer effects were more neutral when interviewing was undertaken by phone compared to face-to-face interviewing (Christoffersen, 1984).
4. Parental psychosomatic stress was measured by daily or weekly experiences of one or more of the following symptoms: burning pressing pains in the upper stomach, headaches,

feelings of being overwhelmed, feeling nervous and unbalanced, and often feeling depressed and sad or edgy for no apparent reason.

5. Transportation costs and daycare costs are not included when the parents are unemployed.
6. Preschool children include children aged between 0 and 6 years old.
7. This study is at present cross-sectional but also the first step of a longitudinal study.

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the
best
parent
is
both
parents

Expert **evidence** in favour of **shared parenting**

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Majority View of Psychiatrists, Paediatricians and Psychologists

The majority view of the psychiatric and paediatric profession is that mothers and fathers are equals as parents, and that a close relationship with both parents is necessary to maximise the child's chances for a healthy and productive life.

J. Atkinson, *Criteria for Deciding Child Custody in the Trial and Appellate Courts*, Family Law Quarterly, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, American Bar Association (Spring 1984).

In a report that "summarizes and evaluates the major research concerning joint custody and its impact on children's welfare", the American Psychological Association (APA) concluded that:

"The research reviewed supports the conclusion that joint custody is associated with certain favourable outcomes for children including father involvement, best interest of the child for adjustment outcomes, child support, reduced relitigation costs, and sometimes reduced parental conflict."

The APA also noted that:

"The need for improved policy to reduce the present adversarial approach that has resulted in primarily sole maternal custody, limited father involvement and maladjustment of both children and parents is critical. Increased mediation, joint custody, and parent education are supported for this policy."

Report to the US Commission on Child and Family Welfare, American Psychological Association (June 14, 1995)

The same American Psychological Association adopted the following resolution at its 1977 meeting:

"Be it resolved that the Council of Representatives recognizes officially and makes suitable promulgation of the fact that it is scientifically and psychologically baseless, as well as a violation of human rights, to discriminate against men because of their sex in assignment of children's custody, in adoption, in the staffing of child-care services, and personnel practices providing for parental leave in relation to childbirth and emergencies involving children and in similar laws and procedures have been repudiated. In their place is a broad political and scientific consensus that children need two parents."

Next Best to an Intact Family

A study evaluated children aged 6 to 15 in the areas of locus of control, self-concept, and family relationships. The children were divided into three groups: shared custody, maternal custody, and intact families.

Intact family children had averaged higher than divorced family children on self-concept and father relationships, and shared custody children averaged higher than sole custody children in these areas. Intact family children had fewer least-positive responses in all areas than divorced family children, and shared custody children had fewer least-positive responses than sole custody children in all areas except mother relationship.

The study indicates that, on average, a two-parent, intact family is the best arrangement for children, and a shared parenting arrangement is better than a sole custody arrangement, that is, a two-parent family is better even if parents are divorced.

R Glover and C Steele, *Comparing the Effects on the Child of Post-divorce Parenting Arrangements*, Journal of Divorce, Vol. 12, No. 2-3, (1989).

Long-term effects were studied in joint custody, sole maternal custody and intact families. Children in joint custody families were found to be more active than in sole custody families or intact families. In low conflict situations children did better (demonstrated less withdrawal) than in either sole custody or intact families.

L.P. Noonan, *Effects of long-term conflict on personality functioning of children of divorce*, The Wright Institute Graduate School of Psychology, Berkeley. Doctoral Thesis. (UMI No. 1984-17931)

Misbehaviour Less Common

A study compared 21 joint custody and 21 maternal custody families, with children between the ages of 4 and 15. Results showed that misbehaviour and 'acting out' were more common among sole custody children.

"A multiple regression analysis of these data found children in joint custody families had fewer behavioural adjustment problems with externalizing behaviour than children in mother custody families."

Rockwell-Evans and Kim Evonne, *Parental and Children's Experiences and Adjustment in Maternal Versus Joint Custody Families*, Doctoral Dissertation, North Texas State University (1991).

Children and Adolescents Adjust Better

517 families with children ranging in age from 10.5 years to 18 years were studies across a four and a half-year period. Measures were: assessed depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades.

Children in shared parenting arrangements were found to have better adjustment on these measures than those in sole custody.

Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch, *Adolescents After Divorce*, Harvard University Press (1996)

A study evaluated 273 families, controlling for 28 variables that influence a predisposition to agree on joint legal custody. Controlling for these factors, children in joint legal custody families had more time with their fathers and fewer adjustment and behaviour problems.

M.L. Gunnoe and S.L. Braver, *The Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Family Functioning, Controlling for Factors that Predispose a joint award*, Child Development.

A study compared 20 joint custody and 20 sole maternal custody families. Children in joint physical custody were rated as better adjusted by their mothers compared with children of sole custody mothers. The children's perceptions in sole custody situations correlated with the amount of time spent with their father.

The more time children from sole maternal custody spent with their fathers, the more accepting both parents were perceived to be, and the more well-adjusted were the children.

D.B. Cowan, *Mother Custody versus Joint Custody: Children's Parental Relationship and Adjustment*, University of Washington. Doctoral Thesis (UMI No. 1982-18213).

Children in joint custody situations were found to be better adjusted than children in sole custody situations.

J.A. Livingston, *Children after Divorce: A Psychosocial analysis of the effects of custody on self esteem*, Doctoral Thesis. State University of New York at Buffalo (UMI No. 1983-26981).

A report quotes several researchers in stressing the “(the) importance of a continued relationship with both parents.” Moreover:

“Children whose relationship with their fathers were disrupted were more vulnerable to a wide range of problems.

“... children had a better self concepts;

“... lack of dire consequences (of shared parenting) for the children as predicted by judges and some psychologists.

“Judges are more readily acknowledging that their area of legal expertise does not equip them to make such decisions based solely upon points of law.”

Betty Spillers Beeson, *Yours, Mine, or Ours? Child Custody Decisions*, Childhood Education (September/October 1984).

“In a study of 378 families, some with unmatched partners, in various custody arrangements, Sharlene Wolchik, Iwrin Sandler and I found in 1985 that children in joint custody had higher feelings of self-worth than children in sole maternal custody.

“Our results showed considerable benefits for joint custody, even when equating predisposing factors. After this adjustment, children in joint custody were found to be significantly better adjusted, and to exhibit less antisocial and impulsive behaviour than sole custody families. Fathers also visited more, and were more involved in childcare, as well as more satisfied with the divorce settlement. Mothers, however, were significantly less satisfied with the custody arrangements in joint custody families.

“When the couple disagrees initially, which is better for the family, for the father to get his preference (joint [custody]) or for the mother to get her preference (sole [custody])?”

“We found that the groups differed significantly in terms of how much financial child support was paid: when sole custody was that arrangement despite the fathers' wishes, 80% was paid (according to what the father reported; the figure was 64% by mothers' report), while when joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference, it zoomed to almost perfect compliance (97% by fathers' report; 94% by mothers' report).

“A similar relationship was found for fathers' contact with the child. It was significantly highest for the group in which joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference. Joint custody, even when awarded despite the contrary preference of the mother, leads to more involved fathers, and almost perfect of financial child support; controlling for predisposing factors, it leads to better adjusted children.

“We believe these findings call for policy makers, in the best interest of the children, to adopt a presumption that is rebuttable for joint legal custody, that is, a judicial preference that both parents retain their right and responsibilities toward their children post divorce.”

Determining the Impact of Joint Custody on Divorcing Families, Sanford Brave, PhD, Professor, Psychology Arizona State University.

Girls Do Better With Shared Parenting

In a study of children in the age range 5 to 12 years, in the early period of separation or divorce, boys and girls in sole custody situation had more negative involvement with their parents than in joint custody situation.

There was an increase reported in sibling rivalry reported for sole custody children when visiting their (non-custodial) father. Girls in joint custody reported to have significantly higher self-esteem than girls in sole custody.

E. B. Karp, *Childrens' adjustment in joint and single custody: An Empirical Study*, Doctoral Thesis. California School of Professional Psychology, Berkeley (UMI No. 1983-6977).

Boys Do Better With Shared Parenting

A study compared children in the aged 5 to 13 years. Boys in joint custody were significantly better adjusted than boys in sole maternal custody. Comparing boys in all groups, boys in joint custody compared very similarly to boys from happy families.

E. G. Pojman, *Emotional Adjustment of Boys in Sole and Joint Custody compared with Adjustment of Boys in Happy and Unhappy Marriages*, Doctoral Thesis. California Graduate Institute (1982).

A study of boys aged 6-11, conducted 1-6 years after divorce, among 20 joint physical custody families and 20 maternal custody families revealed:

"According to rating made by parents and teachers, boys in joint custody had fewer behavioural difficulties than their maternal custody counterparts.

"... fewer emotional and behavioural problems...

"... classroom adjustment... superior... "

Virginia M. Shiller, *Joint versus maternal custody for families with latency age boys: Parent characteristics with child adjustment*, Journal of Orthopsychiatry (July 1986).

Children More Satisfied

Joint custody children were found to be satisfied than sole custody children.

S. Handley, *The experience of the child in sole and joint custody*, Doctoral Thesis. California Graduate School of Marriage and Family Therapy (1985.)

Children whose parents have joint custody appeared to have retained two psychological parents in their lives. Whereas half of the children in single parent custody never see the other parent at all, all of the joint custody children have regular contact with both parents.

Moreover, the interviews with them elicited descriptions of their lives in both houses which revealed that 'business as usual' went on with both parents. In single custody families, in contrast, a visit with the non-custodian was more likely a holiday or a 'date'.

Furthermore, contrary to the warnings about children having to 'serve two masters', the vast majority of children in joint custody are pleased and comfortable with the arrangements.

Other advantages noted were more reliance by the parents on each other for childcare and prevention of parent 'burnout' via more time off from the duties of parenting.

D.A. Luepnitz, A comparison of maternal, paternal, and joint custody: Understanding the varieties of post-divorce family life, *Journal of Divorce*, 9 (1986).

20 joint custody children (ages 7-11) were compared with 20 age-matched children in sole maternal custody. All families were at least two years after separation or divorce. Joint custody children were found to have higher ego strengths, superego strengths and self-esteem than the single custody children. The joint custody children were also found to be less excitable and less impatient than their sole custody counterparts.

S.A. Nunan, Joint custody versus single custody effects on child development, Doctoral Thesis. California School of Professional Psychology, Berkeley. UMI No. 81-10142 (1980).

Children (ages 4-10) in intact families were compared with children in joint custody and single custody families. Children from joint custody were found to be more satisfied with the time spent with both parents. Parents in joint custody were found to be more involved with their children. Joint custody parents found to be less overburdened by parenting responsibilities than sole custody parents.

B. Welsh-Osga, *The effects of custody arrangements on children of divorce*, Doctoral Thesis, University of South Dakota. UMI No. 82-6914 (1981).

Self-esteem was found to be higher in children of joint custody. Children in joint custody report significantly more positive experiences than children of sole maternal custody.

S. A. Wolchik, S. L. Braver and I. N. Sandler, *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 14, (1985): 5-10.

Children's Needs Come First

"In a traditional custody fight – where one parent wins while the other loses – it is too often overlooked that regardless of whether the Father wins or the Mother wins, the children are guaranteed to lose.

"This usual approach of awarding only one parent custody is stacked against the children as they can never win; as the custody battle rages on they witness increasing hostility between the two people they love the most and when it is over they have lost the care and companionship of one parent.

"To protect the child from such a devastating loss should be a high priority in any custody determination. Joint custody has been shown to provide just such protection.

"There is no doubt that joint custody yields two psychological parents, and that the children do not suffer the profound sense of loss characteristic of so many children of divorce. The children maintained strong attachments to both parents. Perhaps the security of an ongoing relationship with two psychological parents helps to provide the means to cope successfully with the uprooting effects of switching households."

Alice Abarbanel, *Shared parenting after separation and divorce: A study of joint custody*, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1979): 328.

"It is difficult to take issue with the importance, for children and parents alike, of maximizing the involvement and participation of the Mother and the Father in the child's life."

Elissa P. Bendek, *Joint custody: Solution or illusion?*, American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 136, No. 12 (December, 1979): 1540-1544.

"(C)hildren need from their fathers and mothers together a balanced, complementary, and stable relationship, and this is no less the case for partners who are separated from each other."

Cynthia Milligan and Alan Dowie, *What do children need from their fathers?*, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, The University of Edinburgh (1998).

Fathers with joint custody are more likely to involve themselves in all aspects of their child's growth and development. The maintenance of such ties can be critical for both Father and Mother.

Judith Brown Grief, *Fathers, children, and joint custody*, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1979).

"Joint custody benefits children in three principle areas:

"First, they received the clear message that they were loved and wanted by both parents.

"Second, they add a sense of importance in their family and the knowledge that their parents made great efforts to jointly care for them, both factors of which were important to their self-esteem.

"Third, they had physical access to both parents, and the psychological permission to love and be with both parents. This protected them from the crippling loyalty conflicts often seen in children who are caught in the crossfire of their parents, ongoing battles.

"Also, there were significant benefits for the Mothers and Fathers who were involved in a joint custody arrangement and that diminished hostilities between the parents was another fringe benefit.

"The overriding benefit for these parents was the sharing of the burdens and pleasures of child rearing. Most of the working Mothers valued time off to pursue their careers and their adult social life. Their sense of identity and self-esteem gained from their paid employment allowed them more easily to relinquish the role of full-time parent.

A study evaluated children's perceptions of their fathers at least four years post-divorce, comparing joint custody, sole custody and intact families. The subjects were 43 latency-age children: 11 from maternal custody families, 14 from joint custody families and 18 controls from intact homes.

Results: "There was a significant difference in the perceptions of children in sole and joint custody. Joint custody children reported spending more time with their fathers in child-centred activities, activities which were considered pleasurable and important to children."

Holly Zingale Ilfeld, *Children's perceptions of their relationship with their fathers in three family constellations: mother sole custody, joint custody and intact families*, PhD Dissertation. University of California, Davis (1989).

A study investigated children (aged 9-12) in 15 joint custodial, 15 sole maternal and 15 sole paternal homes. Parents in sole custodial homes (both maternal and paternal) were perceived as using psychological pressure techniques to control children, for example, inducing guilt. In joint custody homes, however, the perception of the children was that such techniques were seldom used.

B.H. Granite, *An investigation of the relationships among self-concept, parental behaviours, and the adjustment of children in different living arrangements following a marital separation and/or divorce*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia. UMI No. 85-23424 (1985).

Ninety fathers were questioned regarding how unequal recognition of parental rights might encourage conflict. Joint legal custody was found to encourage parental co-operation and discourage self-interest. Sole custody encouraged punishment-oriented persuasion strategies. Unequal custody power was perceived as inhibiting parental co-operation by both parents.

M.R. Patrician, *The effects of legal child-custody status on persuasion strategy choices and communication goals of fathers*, Doctoral Thesis, University of San Francisco. UMI No. 85-14995 (1984).

A study used data from the National Survey of Families and Households: a survey of over 13,000 families that collected data in two waves, 1987-88 and 1992-94. Because the study included data on the quality of family relationships, it was possible to study the effects of joint legal custody while controlling from pre-separation family relationships by analysing data on families that had separated between the survey waves. The study concluded:

"Controlling for the quality of family relationships before separation and socio-economic status, fathers with joint legal custody see their children more frequently, have more overnight visits, and pay more child support than fathers in families in which mothers have sole legal custody."

the best parents is both parents

It also suggests that joint legal custody helps reduce visitation denial:

"By clarifying that divorced fathers are 'by law' still fathers, parents' negotiations about fathers' participation in child rearing after divorce may shift from trying to resolve *whether* fathers will be involved in child rearing to the matter of *how* fathers will be involved." (emphases in original).

J. Seltzer, *Father by Law: Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Non-residential Fathers Involvement with Children*, University of Wisconsin-Madison. NSFH Paper No. 75 (February 1997).

Concerned Citizen for Children's Rights false information refuted with Scholarly Studies!

A summary of Scholarly Research on Joint Custody

SHARED PARENTING INITIATIVE

FACT: (This measure is not mandatory!) and does not force a 50/50 on everyone!

Fallacy: The proposed initiative erases our current child support system. It limits child support to "actual costs" for "basic needs." These terms are not defined, and open to wide interpretation. Many non-custodial parents may actually end up paying much more than they do now. The initiatives propose eliminating all penalties for not paying child support.

Fact: Child support will be calculated on both parents income not just the fathers! It will be fairer and basic needs are a cost shares added. We need accountability to show the support goes to the children. Both parents have a responsibility to pay for the child! The DHS has the words "basic needs all over its documentation so I hope the state knows what basic needs are.

When both parents share the social and economic responsibilities of childcare, children appear to adapt better to their changed living arrangements than when the mothers bear these responsibilities alone. Seltzer, Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1991.

Fallacy: In 2003 the legislature passed a "Parents' Bill of Rights" (NDCC 14-09-28) which guarantees a wide array of parental custody rights. It includes everything from the right to access dental records to the right to reasonable access to the child. If more specific rights are needed, why not build on this current statute?

Fact: These so called rights are a joke they are not enforced and no parent should be limited in their rights to their children! A non responsive legislature is why we brought forward this initiative.

Fallacy: 50/50 custody arrangements are not based on the best interests of the child. Virtually every recent study of the psychological well-being of children has indicated shuffling children back and forth has very negative impacts. The initiatives also pose logistical nightmares, making it almost impossible for children to maintain consistent and stable school, church, and social environments.

Fact: Absolutely false! Studies show children need both parents to be well developed. Over the last four decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children growing up in homes without fathers. In 1960, fewer than 10 million children did not live with their fathers. Today, the number is nearly 25 million. More than one-third of these children will not see their fathers at all during the course of a year. Studies show that children who grow up without responsible fathers are significantly more likely to experience poverty, perform poorly in

school, engage in criminal activity, and abuse drugs and alcohol. HHS supports programs and policies that reflect the critical role that both fathers and mothers play in building strong and successful families and in the well-being of children. President Bush and HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson have made promoting involved, committed, responsible fatherhood a national priority. On initiative includes encouraging more responsible fathering by non-custodial parents. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services fact sheet: Promoting responsible Fatherhood (2002).

Our participants, who have lived through their parents' divorces and have now entered young adulthood (and college) have given us their 'expert' advice. Seventy percent of them, men and women alike, believe that living equal amounts of time with each parent is the best arrangement for children." Fabricius, W.V. and J. Hall, (2000) "Young Adults Perspective on Divorce", Family and Conciliation Courts Review, Vol. 38, 446-461. "

Growing up with dad: A comparison of children aged 3-5 years old living with their mothers or their fathers. Childhood, 5(1), 41-54. This Danish study used a scientific sample, drawn from national birth records, of 478 single fathers and 532 single mothers, including situations that can be classified as joint physical custody. Results indicated that children fared better with single fathers, possibly as a result of greater contact with the other parent (i.e. joint physical custody with mother), economic stability of fathers, and more social support, including greater contact with grandparents. Christoffersen, M. N. (1998).

Fallacy: The system is not pumping out dysfunction children... not creating more domestic violence."

Fact: Studies show our current family law is harming our children. Sigmund Freud once wrote, "I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection."

ominous symptoms of anger, depression, and a deep sense of loss by depriving the child of the opportunity to maintain a full relationship with each parent. Kelly, J. 1991. Examining Resistance to Joint Custody. Joint Custody and Shared Parenting, second edition, Guilford Press.

According to divorce magazine.com "Fatherless homes account for 63% of youth suicides, 90% of homeless/runaway children, 85% of all children with behavioral problems, 71% of high school drop outs, 85% of youths in prison, and well over 50% of teen mothers."

More than a quarter of American children—nearly 17 million—do not live with their father. Girls without a father in their life are two and a half times as likely to get pregnant and 53 percent more likely to commit suicide. Boys without a father in their life are 63 percent more likely to run away and 37 percent more likely to abuse drugs. Both girls and boys are twice as likely to drop out of high school, twice as likely to end up in jail and nearly four times as likely to need help for emotional or behavioral problems." —HHS Press Release, Friday, March 26, 1999."

Children who live without contact with their biological father are 5 times more likely to live in poverty, more likely to bring weapons and drugs into the classroom, twice as likely to commit crime, twice as likely to drop out of school, twice as likely to be abused, more likely to commit suicide, more than twice as likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, and more likely to become pregnant as teenagers. The best predictor of crime in a community is the percentage of absent father

households. Seventy percent of U.S. citizens believe that the most significant family or social problem facing the U.S. is the physical absence of the father from the home, resulting in a lack of involvement of fathers in the rearing and development of children. There is a social need to reconnect children and fathers. For the future of the United States and the future of our children, Congress, States and local communities should assist parents to become more actively involved in their children's lives. Domininci & Bayh, 1999. Introduction to the Responsible Fatherhood Bill (S. 1364)

Fallacy: These arrangements will also force more contact between victims and their abusers in domestic violence situations. 50/50 custody may even encourage victims to stay in their violent relationships because it will become nearly impossible to completely sever ties with the abusive party, or to manage contacts in a safe way.

Fact: Domestic violence is separate. We have places to exchange kids in these situations. DV allegations are largely false.

These findings indicate that children do not actually need to be in a joint physical custody to show better adjustment but just need to spend substantial time with both parents, especially their fathers. Also, joint custody couples reported less conflict; possibly because both parents could participate in their children's lives equally and not spend the time arguing over childcare decisions. Unfortunately a perception exists that joint custody is more harmful because it exposes children to ongoing parental conflict. In fact, the studies in this review found that sole-custody parents reported higher levels of conflict. Review by the American Psychological Association of Bauserman, R. (2002). Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, V 16, n 1.

Conflict between divorcing parents did not appear to worsen as a result of the increased demand for interparental cooperation and communication in joint legal or joint residential custody arrangements. Pearson, J. & Thoennes, N., 1990. Custody after Divorce: Demographic and attitudinal patterns, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol 60.

Fallacy: Courts and lawyers will be brought into family disputes constantly to settle disputes ranging from medical care to educational choices.

Fact: These initiatives will reduce the intrusion of the courts in many family's lives. This is what the parenting plan will take care of. Courts are not needed unless the two parents cannot agree.

Fallacy: The only way a parent can get out of a 50/50 arrangement is to have one parent declared "unfit" by the court. And if there hasn't been a "fitness hearing," a parent can request one "at any time." The stigma of being labeled unfit will impact both parents and children for years to come. Court intervention will become an expensive, routine tool for harassment. Do we really want to invite more legal intervention in our families? The absolute opposite will occur. Courts and lawyers will be brought into family disputes constantly to settle disputes ranging from medical care to educational choices.

Fact: Lawyers and judges shall not go forward with a fitness hearing unless clear and convincing proof is available. Less court time and costs.

Fallacy: Although some well-intentioned people honestly believe these initiatives would improve our current systems for families, these initiatives are part of a well orchestrated national campaign to disrupt the courts and destroy essential family supports. The initiatives promote the rights of adults over the rights of children to a safe, secure, and nurturing childhood. A broad based grassroots coalition of groups and individuals who care about children and families is emerging to oppose these self-serving efforts.

Fact: Only uncaring bureaucrats, lawyers, and people who don't care about families oppose these initiatives. They profit off of the divorce industry and ignore the studies.

Fallacy: (Q) Isn't the term "shared parenting" just another way to say that both of the child's parents have the right and obligation to participate in raising the child? (A) "Shared parenting" is another term for joint legal and physical custody. This is a particular type of custody arrangement in which typically children spend half of each week with each of the parents and in which the parents make shared decisions about all matters pertaining to the child's welfare.

Fact: Custody does not have to be half of each week. It is what ever the parents work out in the parenting plan.

Fallacy: Q. Is spending time with both parents the biggest factor in how well a child will adjust to divorce? A. No. The weight of evidence does not support the view that higher levels of non-custodial parent contact are automatically or always beneficial to children. A comprehensive review of the literature conducted by a Washington State panel on "shared parenting" showed that the single most important determinant of child well-being after divorces is living in a household with adequate income. This was followed closely by levels of parental conflict, the well-being of the custodial parent, neighborhood quality and frequency of moves. (1)

Fact: Two parent involvement is more important than income levels.

The benefits of maintaining contact with both parents exceed any special need for relationships with male or female parents. The empirical literature also shows that infants and toddlers need regular interaction with both of their parents to foster and maintain their attachments...In addition, it is necessary for the interactions with both parents to occur in a variety of contexts (feeding, playing, diapering, soothing, putting to bed, etc.) to ensure that the relationships are consolidated and strengthened. In general, relationships with parents play a crucial role in shaping children's social, emotional, personal, and cognitive development, and there is a substantial literature documenting the adverse effects of disrupted parent-child relationships on children's development and adjustment. There is substantial evidence that children are more likely to attain their psychological potential when they are able to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with both of their parents, whether the two parents live together or not. Very large research literatures now document the adverse effects of severed father-child relationships as well as the positive contributions that fathers make to their children's research. To be responsive to the infant's psychological needs, the parenting schedules adopted for children younger than 2 or 3 must involve more transitions, rather than fewer, to ensure the continuity of both relationships and the child's security and comfort during a time of great change. The ideal situation is one in which infants and toddlers have opportunities to interact

with both parents every day or every other day in a variety of functional contexts (feeding, play, discipline, basic care, limit setting, putting to bed, etc.). Unfortunately, the concept of location-engendered stability (one home, one bed) has been incorrectly overemphasized for infants and toddlers, without due consideration for the greater significance to the child of the emotional, social, and cognitive contributions of both parent-child relationship. Living in one location (geographic stability) ensures only one type of stability. Stability is also created for infants (and older children) by the predictable comings and goings of both parents, regular feeding and sleeping schedules, consistent and appropriate care, and affection and acceptance. There is absolutely no evidence that children's psychological adjustment or the relationship between children and their parents are harmed when children spend overnight periods with their other parents. Indeed, there is substantial evidence regarding the benefits of these regular experiences. Kelly, J.B. & Lamb, M.E., 2000. Using child development research to make appropriate custody and access decisions for young children. Family and Conciliation Courts Review. Vol 38 Issue: 3 : 297-311, Sage Publications.

"Children in joint physical or legal custody were better adjusted than children in sole-custody settings, but no different from those in intact families. More positive adjustment of joint-custody children held for separate comparisons of general adjustment, family relationships, self-esteem, emotional and behavioral adjustment, and divorce-specific adjustment. Joint-custody parents reported less current and past conflict than did sole-custody parents, but this did not explain the better adjustment of joint-custody children. The results are consistent with the hypothesis that joint custody can be advantageous for children in some cases, possibly by facilitating ongoing positive involvement with both parents." Bauserman, R., (2002) "Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review", Journal of Family Psychology, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2002) 91-102.

"I review new findings on (a) college students' perspectives on their living arrangements after their parents' divorces, (b) their relations with their parents as a function of their living arrangements, (c) their adjustment as a function of their parents' relocation, and (d) the amount of college support they received. Students endorsed living arrangements that gave them equal time with their fathers, they had better outcomes when they had such arrangements and when their parents supported their time with the other parent, they experienced disagreement between mothers and fathers over living arrangements, and they gave evidence of their fathers' continuing commitment to them into their young adult years." Fabricius, W.V. (2003) Listening to Children of Divorce Family Relations Volume 52 Issue 4 Page 385 - October 2003.

"Psychologists Becoming More Sophisticated In Their Custody Evaluation Practices, Survey Finds" More Inclined Toward Joint Custody; Less Likely to Make Judgments Based on a Single Factor than 10 Years Ago This report shows that joint custody is becoming the option of choice among experts: "While in 1986 more than half of the situations on the list prompted an endorsement of one parent over the other, by 1996, less than a quarter of the items resulted in endorsement of one parent over the other, indicating a greater preference for joint custody over sole- or single-parent custody than in 1986." Ackerman, M.J. and Ackerman, M. "Custody Evaluation Practices: A Survey of Experienced Professionals (Revisited)", Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Vol. 28, No. 2. (1997). APA announcement: <http://mirror.apa.org/releases/custody.html>

Adolescents After Divorce, Buchanan, C., Maccoby, and Dornbusch, Harvard University

Press, 1996. A study of 517 families with children ranging in age from 10.5 years to 18 years, across a four and a half year period. Measures were: assessed depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Children in shared parenting arrangements were found to have better adjustment on these measures than those in sole custody. Joan B. Kelly, one of the most respected experts in the field of children and divorce, summarized the Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch study as follows: "The adjustment of 517 adolescents (aged 10 years, 6 months to 18 years) in three residential arrangements was compared 4.5 years after separation by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (in press). Looking at both family process and status variables, these researchers assessed adolescent adjustment in terms of depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Statistically, more boys were in dual-residence and father-residence arrangements, whereas more girls were in mother-residence arrangements. Overall, dual-residence adolescents were better adjusted than were mother-residence adolescents." (Current research on children's postdivorce adjustment. Family and Conciliation Courts Review, 31.29-49, 1993)

Found the same correlation between joint physical custody awards and reduced divorce. They conjectured that fathers are more likely to form strong bonds with children if they know that their relationship would be protected through joint physical custody in the event of a divorce. Margaret F. Brinig and F.H. Buckley, "Joint Custody: Bonding and Monitoring Theories," 73 Indiana Law Journal 393 (1998).

There is a significant correlation between joint physical custody awards and reduced divorce rates. Kuhn, R. & Guidubaldi, J., 1997. Child Custody Policies and Divorce Rates in the U.S. 11th Annual Conference of the Children's Rights Council. October, 1997, Washington, D.C.

This study re confirmed the - negative effects of divorce and high conflict between parents (in divorce or marriage), particularly in risk of drug use, lower academic achievement and behavior problems. However, some factors reduced problems: 1) children whose fathers remain involved with their school activities have better outcomes, 2) divorce and custody mediation results in lower conflict between parents, 3) joint custody leads to better outcomes for children. Joan B. Kelly, one of the most respected experts in the field of children and divorce, summarized the Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch study as follows: "The adjustment of 517 adolescents (aged 10 years, 6 months to 18 years) in three residential arrangements was compared 4.5 years after separation by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1996). Looking at both family process and status variables, these researchers assessed adolescent adjustment in terms of depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Statistically, more boys were in dual-residence and father-residence arrangements, whereas more girls were in mother-residence arrangements. Overall, dual-residence adolescents were better adjusted than were mother-residence adolescents." Kelly, J. B.. Children's adjustment in conflicted marriage and divorce: A decade review of research. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 39, 963-973 (2000).

Studies have shown that the amount of contact non-residential fathers have with their children diminishes over time due to social rules of father disengagement, lack of skills, societal ambivalence toward fatherhood, geographic mobility, remarriage, lack of access, psychological pain at not being able to see their children, inadequate financial resources, feeling the pain of the artificial nature of visitation, diminished parenting role, unequal custody power and litigation. Nord, C.W. and Zill, N. (1996). Non-Custodial Parents' Participation in Their Children's Lives:

Evidence from the Survey of Income and Program Participation. Vol II: Synthesis of Literature. Prepared for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This report "summarizes and evaluates the major research concerning joint custody and its impact on children's welfare." The report concludes that "The research reviewed supports the conclusion that joint custody is associated with certain favorable outcomes for children including father involvement, best interest of the child for adjustment outcomes, child support, reduced relitigation costs, and sometimes reduced parental conflict." The APA also noted that "The need for improved policy to reduce the present adversarial approach that has resulted in primarily sole maternal custody, limited father involvement and maladjustment of both children and parents is critical. Increased mediation, joint custody, and parent education are supported for this policy." Division 16, School Psychology, American Psychological Association, Report to the U.S. Commission on Child and Family Welfare, June 14, 1995.

Fallacy: Q. Is the Concerned Citizens for Children's Rights Committee opposed to "shared parenting" arrangements in all circumstances? A. No. Shared parenting may be a very good option for divorcing parents in low conflict situations. However, its adoption as a presumption, with or without a domestic violence exception, will have devastating consequences for victims of domestic violence and their children. By contrast, current custody law allows for orders of joint custody/shared parenting in appropriate situations and provides appropriate safe guards for victims and their children.

Fact: Shared Parenting and DV are two separate issues and studies support that shared parenting reduces conflict. Yes they are opposed to Shared Parenting!!!!!!

Kelly, J. B. (2000). Children's adjustment in conflicted marriage and divorce: A decade review of research. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 39, 963-973. "Joint custody led to better child outcomes overall. " Kelly, J., Current research on children's post-divorce adjustment. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 31.29-49, 1993

1. On child satisfaction: "Children have expressed higher levels of satisfaction with joint physical custody than with sole custody arrangements; citing the benefit of remaining close to both parents. Joint custody does not create confusion for the majority of youngsters about their living arrangements or about the finality of the divorce, nor does increase loyalty conflicts (Leupnitz, 1982; Shiller, 1986a, 1986b; Steinman, 1981)."
2. On parent satisfaction: "A surprising finding in one study was that mothers who share custody are more satisfied than those having sole custody and whose children see their father periodically. However, both groups expressed more satisfaction with their residential arrangement than did sole-custody mothers whose children had no paternal contact."
3. On conflict situations: "Dual-residence (joint physical custody) parents had the highest co-operative-communication scores but did not differ from mother custody or father custody parents in the amount of discord. Shared residence did not exacerbate or diminish conflict but did appear to lead to more co-operative communication."

4. On child adjustment: "The adjustment of 517 adolescents (aged 10 years, 6 months to 18 years) in three residential arrangements was compared 4.5 years after separation by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (in press). Looking at both family process and status variables, these researchers assessed adolescent adjustment in terms of depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Statistically, more boys were in dual-residence and father-residence arrangements, whereas more girls were in mother-residence arrangements. Overall, dual-residence adolescents were better adjusted than were mother-residence adolescents."

"Joint custody is also the preferred option in high conflict situations because it helps reduce the conflict over time - and that is in the best interests of the children." Bender reviews current and historical research on the 'myths' of joint custody, i.e. - that joint custody should not be awarded when the mother objects or in high conflict matters. The article describes the benefits of joint custody including that children adjust better post-divorce in joint custody as compared to sole custody awards, children's attachment to both parents post-divorce is essential for healthy child development, joint custody leads to higher levels of financial compliance, relitigation is lower as compared to sole custody, and joint custody leads to the best outcome for children even in high conflict situations because it forces resolution and best leads to reduction of child stress in the long term. Bender, W.N. 1994. Joint custody: The option of choice. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 21 (3/4): 115-131.

Division 16, School Psychology, American Psychological Association, Report to the U.S. Commission on Child and Family Welfare, June 14, 1995. This report "summarizes and evaluates the major research concerning joint custody and its impact on children's welfare." The report concludes that "The research reviewed supports the conclusion that joint custody is associated with certain favorable outcomes for children including father involvement, best interest of the child for adjustment outcomes, child support, reduced relitigation costs, and sometimes reduced parental conflict." The APA also noted that "The need for improved policy to reduce the present adversarial approach that has resulted in primarily sole maternal custody, limited father involvement and maladjustment of both children and parents is critical. Increased mediation, joint custody, and parent education are supported for this policy." "Children have expressed higher levels of satisfaction with joint physical custody than with sole custody arrangements; citing the benefit of remaining close to both parents. Joint custody does not create confusion for the majority of youngsters about their living arrangements or about the finality of the divorce, nor does increase loyalty conflicts (Leupnitz, 1982; Shiller, 1986a, 1986b; Steinman, 1981)." Kelly, J., Current research on children's postdivorce adjustment. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 31.29-49, 1993

Fallacy: Q. Is a change in law necessary for a court to issue an award of joint legal and physical custody?

A. No. Current North Dakota law has no presumption either for or against joint custody and essentially directs a case by case analysis to arrive at a custody arrangement that is "in the best interests of the child". Our current laws provide an array of custodial options that can both provide necessary protections for children who are at risk and accommodate parents who desire to engage in a shared parenting arrangement.

Fact: ND law has no wording allowing shared parenting and custody is biasly awarded to mothers. The best interest of children is nonexistent in our divorce industry.

Fallacy: Q. What would be the impact of the proposed initiatives on child support?

A. The proposed initiatives erase our current child support system. They limit child support to "actual costs" for "basic needs." These terms are not clearly defined, and are open to wide interpretation. Many non-custodial parents, especially parents of special needs children, may actually end up paying much more than they do now. In addition, the initiatives propose eliminating all penalties for not paying child support. This would leave the responsible parent no recourse should the irresponsible parent choose not to pay. What happens to the children then? In addition, the proposed initiatives would cost the state of North Dakota millions in federal child support and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds over the next biennium.

Fact: Child support will be determined by the parenting plan and should use the Chapter 75 administrative code guidelines for joint physical custody so both parents share in the costs of raising the children. Basic needs are a cost shares addition. The NDSPI does not put the state at any risk of loosing millions of Federal monies. If the state chooses to say that federal monies is more important than two parent involvement in our children's lives-we need an over haul of legislators!

Fact: Joint physical custody simply is not awarded and that is why it happens less than 5% of the time. Where the kids are going to sleep is not the problem. School systems will not be an issue. Judges already rule on issues that harm our children. Who will pay for braces or basket ball are not a problem.

Fact: The cost to tax payers is already a problem which costs the ND tax payer 60 to 80 million each year with direct and indirect costs. There is no flexibility in ND family law and our children are being harmed due to this.

Fact: Child support is a failure because it is an unfair system in ND. Many states are trying to make reform but special interest groups who profit off of divorce block legislation.

Fallacy: Joint physical custody appears to mean very little in practice. Studies show that joint custody doesn't improve communication and cooperation among parents or lead to increased participation in decision making regarding the children. Cherlin, A. Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage

Fact: Read above studies proving this false!

Fallacy: Studies show that kids in joint physical custody families are no better adjusted than children from single-parent physical custody families. Furstenberg, F., Cherlin, A. Divided Families.

Fact: It is ironic, and of some interest, that we have subjected joint custody to a level and intensity of scrutiny that was never directed toward the traditional post-divorce arrangement (sole legal and physical custody to the mother and two weekends each month of visiting to the father.) Developmental and relationship theory should have alerted the mental health field to the

potential immediate and long range consequences for the child of only seeing a parent four days each month. And yet until recently, there was no particular challenge to this traditional post-divorce parenting arrangement, despite growing evidence that such post-divorce relationships were not sufficiently nurturing or stabilizing for many children and parents. There is some evidence that in our well-meaning efforts to save children in the immediate post-separation period from anxiety, confusion, and the normative divorce-engendered conflict, we have set the stage in the longer run for the more ominous symptoms of anger, depression, and a deep sense of loss by depriving the child of the opportunity to maintain a full relationship with each parent. Kelly, J. 1991. Examining Resistance to Joint Custody. Joint Custody and Shared Parenting, second edition, Guilford Press.

Fallacy: Joint physical custody should be encouraged only in cases in which both parents voluntarily agree to it. Furstenberg, F., Cherlin, A. Divided Families

Fact: This is a sad statement most studies show this harms children. No one parent has the right to take the parenting rights away from the other!

Fallacy: If Measure #3 passes, the fiscal impact on state taxpayers could be in excess of \$79 million dollars: \$73 million in child support & TANF funds, \$5 million in court costs, and \$3 million in county costs. 5,000 poor children receiving benefits under TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) could be without support if Measure #3 passes.

Fact: Absolutely false!!!!!!! Dr. Wade horn letter addresses this as well as Mark Rogers report!

Fallacy: There is currently \$220 million dollars of unpaid child support in North Dakota. Under Measure #3, no system would be in place to collect it.

Fact: The obligor system of calculating child support needs to be changed to the shared income model and a cost shares as well. The obligor system fails because it is unfair. Again false information we already have joint physical custody child support guidelines in Administrative code.

Fallacy: Conflict between parents is the fundamental factor that harms children's development and produces behavior problems. Block, J. H., Block, J., Gjerde, P.

Fact: Maybe true but conflict is created by the current system by giving the power to one parent to abuse the other.

Fallacy: Although perhaps not perfect, North Dakota's current custody laws assume that custody best rests with a mother and father who have the best interest of their child at heart. In a divorce or custody situation, parents routinely agree to joint custody or stipulate to one parent having legal or physical custody of the children, and the so-called non-custodial parent negotiates visitation rights. During this process, courts remain only peripherally involved.

Right now, courts become involved only in instances when the parents are in conflict over custody arrangements and cannot agree on decisions about the best interest of the child. Then the court steps in to determine how the best interest of the child will be served by using 13 statutory

guidelines and prescribing arrangements for custody, visitation, and parental rights and responsibilities.

The proposed initiative could do irreparable harm to families in North Dakota. Current North Dakota statutes address the rights of mothers and fathers, yet we must have a manageable process when mothers and fathers are in conflict, and we must do so in the interest of children's long term welfare.

Fact: This is no best interest of the children in mind only gender bias. If parents do not agree the father is forced out of his children's life. No court has the right to take away a parents rights without being found unfit.

Fallacy: An initiated measure may not be changed by legislative action for seven years, unless overturned by 2/3 of the legislature, ultimately leaving any unintended negative consequences on children in place for a very long time.

The initiated measure would drastically alter the current child support system. These changes would take North Dakota out of compliance with Federal statutes and North Dakota could become ineligible for TANF funding.

Under the "fitness" provision of the measure, parents would have to resort to having the other parent declared unfit in order to escape the 50/50 custody mandate.

Under the initiated measure, the court would be required to step in during each instance of dispute between parents or when parenting plans (which are not defined) fail to resolve disputes, for example conflict over making medical or financial decisions for the child. The court would also be required to review and approve any stipulated changes to parenting plans to ensure the child's best interest. In effect, the courts would be constantly intervening in people's lives

Fact: False information!

Fallacy: Under the initiated measure, the current child support system would become obsolete. A new system would have to be designed for determining the amount of child support determined to be "actual cost for providing basic needs" (which is not defined in the measure); the management of payment from one parent to another would eliminate the court's ability to enforce fiscal parental responsibility without extensive intrusion into the financial status of each parent on a continuing basis. Paying for totally revamping the system and all these intrusions would fall to North Dakota tax payers. The cost would be enormous.

North Dakota would probably be out of compliance with federal child support laws; thus counties and the state could be ineligible for federal TANF funding, eliminating or reducing drastically programs for children such as childcare support and education support.

Fact: False information – See Dr. Wade Horn letter and Mark Rogers report!

Fallacy: The initiated measure removes focus on the child and creates a system that becomes adult driven. It is a self-described "disgruntled spouse" initiative.

Courts would be required to settle a multitude of disputes between parents when they disagree on the best interest of the child. Each parent (with physical and legal custody) would have to agree on such things as medical treatment, mental health treatment, legal waivers for participation in activities, and many other day to day situations or the court could step in.

In all contested custody proceedings, the “unfit” standards proven by clear and convincing evidence would create even more hostility between the parents because each may attempt to prove this standard, increasing the probability of child abuse and neglect reports, reports of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other harm to the child.

Now once the court makes a custody determination it remains in effect for two years in most cases. There would be no respite or reprieve for either the child or custodial parent under the new plan because either parent could petition the court on an on-going basis. The potential for harassment is unending.

Fact: There are no legal standards in our current family law to use to support this measure. That is why this measure is set up to protect parent’s rights so it can hold up in court. The parenting plan takes care of these issues. It is up to the judges to stop these games from being played!

Excerpts from Farrell, Warren Ph.D. (2001). *Father and Child Reunion: How to Bring the Dads We Need to the Children We Love*. Penguin Putnam Inc., NY.

The “right” for which fathers’ -rights groups are fighting is the right to more responsibility for children.

When divorce occurs, men’s biggest fear is emotional insecurity; women’s is economic security—men’s biggest fear is typically, losing their children - women’s is poverty.

A mother who has a true motherhood instinct will be fighting for the father to be involved as if her children’s lives depended on it.

The amount of time a father spends with a child is one of the strongest predictors of empathy in adulthood.

The most important factor by far in preventing drug use is a close relationship with dad.

Few people know that children do better with dads.

When children live with only their moms, the parents are nine times as likely to have conflict as when children live with their dads.

Children who live with their dads are likely to have more contact with their moms and feel better about their moms than vice-versa. Put another way, children who live with their dads are more likely to have, in effect, two parents.

These forms of play (roughhousing inherent in father-child interactions) seem to improve child development in three major areas: the management of emotions, the development of intelligence and academic achievement.

The decision to keep the child with the mother is theoretically made in the best interests of the child; however, when children were surveyed later in life, fewer than half felt their mother's motives had anything to do with their best interests.

The message to men is clear. "You are your children's visitor" and then we wonder why men don't participate equally in childcare.

A child's best interests are served only when everyone's interests are considered.

If we expect men to be psychologically involved, we need to give men equal psychological time. If we expect men to be legally responsible, then close-to-equal time needs to be a legal right.

Equal parenting begins with equal parenting. Equal parenting will not begin, though, if men know that the investment of their heart will be treated with contempt by the law.

Sometimes a dad's sense of powerlessness makes him withdraw. We call him a deadbeat. It's usually more accurate to call him deadened.

In states that adopt shared parenting time, divorce rates drop within a few years.

How can we ask men to be more involved with children when we put them in prison, deprive them of equal access and require them to pay more?

But when the woman's right to move away means that the father and children will become strangers, then the woman's right is no more a unilateral right than is the children's or the father's right to each other's love.

Thus, a quarter century's worth of studies showing domestic violence against men to be more than equal to domestic violence against women receive so little publicity as to barely make a dent on the public's consciousness.

"The risk of suicide has recently risen only for men—from four times higher than women's risk to almost five times higher. And divorce increases his risk of suicide even more, to ten times greater than a divorced woman's." — "If he is fighting to be with his and your children, and he loses, I predict we will eventually discover that American men in that position are about fifteen times more likely to commit suicide than their wives; if he feels he has been falsely accused of abusing you, about twenty times greater; if he feels he has been falsely accused of child molestation, about thirty times greater."

Shared parent time introduces the child to a century of options and the plurality of life; and to the understanding the while divorce produces change and instability, it also produced the ability to make changes and develop inner resources in times of instability, that the twenty-first century is

marked by flexibility, not decisions made as a child that are written in stone for life; that parents can divorce and parents can be good and loving...

Excerpts from Horn, W.F. and Sylvester, T. (2002). *Father Facts: Fourth Edition*. National Fatherhood Initiative: Gaithersburg, M.D.

One out of every three children will go to bed in a home in which his or her father does not live. The fact is children need their fathers.

Fathers who live with their children are more likely to have a close, enduring relationship with their children than those who do not.

Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy, and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers.

Over the past four decades, Fatherlessness has emerged as one of our greatest social problems. Fatherlessness is not the only cause of these things, but our nation must recognize it is an important factor. (President George W. Bush - June, 2001)

A 25-year follow-up of adults who had experienced parental divorce when they were 2.4 through 6 years of age found that no child who saw his or her father under a rigidly enforced court order or unmodified parental agreement had a good relationship with him after reaching adulthood.

The research is absolutely clear... the one human being most capable of curbing the antisocial aggression of a boy is his biological father.

All of these issues are covered by current law!

1. Joint physical custody
2. Unfitness
3. Parenting plans
4. Studies and US court rulings
5. Basic needs and child support
6. Not out of compliance – other states are not

The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children.

Office of Child Abuse and Neglect: Rosenberg, Wilcox 2006 this means that fathers were involved in 36.8 percent of child maltreatment cases and that mothers were involved in 64 percent of child maltreatment cases.

Mothers were the sole perpetrators in 40.8 percent of the cases involving death and harm.

In fact, the studies in this review found that sole-custody parents reported higher levels of conflict. Review by the American Psychological Association of Bauserman, R. (2002). *Child*

Adjustment in Joint-Custody versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review.
Journal of Family Psychology, V 16, n 1.

There is absolutely no evidence that children's psychological adjustment or the relationship between children and their parents are harmed when children spend overnight periods with their other parents. Indeed, there is substantial evidence regarding the benefits of these regular experiences. Kelly, J.B. & Lamb, M.E., 2000. Using child development research to make appropriate custody and access decisions for young children. Family and Conciliation Courts Review. Vol 38 Issue: 3 : 297-311, Sage Publications.

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Bender, W.N. 1994. Joint custody: The option of choice. Journal of Divorce & Remarriage 21 (3/4): 115-131. Joint custody is also the preferred option in high conflict situations because it helps reduce the conflict over time - and that is in the best interests of the children."

Here are some results of studies conducted by competent researchers that substantiate that shared parenting is best for children in most cases. It's a little long, but contains many useful conclusions based on studies of multiple paradigms of families in separate households.

I believe these summaries can be used to persuade politicians to support legislation advancing the mission of CCJ and the rights of children to unfettered access to both parents.

Research Studies you can download here:

1. Bauserman
2. Compilation of Studies - Childrens Rights Council
3. Nygaard
4. Parent Equality Research - Ireland

All the credible research proves that what is best for children is equal time with both parents. If you are not doing this for your children you are setting them up for failure in life.

Research on Shared Parenting and Joint Custody

Joint custody and shared parenting (i.e., joint physical and legal custody) have been studied for more than a quarter-century, with the majority of studies indicating significant benefits for children. About a third of existing studies show no difference between joint and sole custody for children's adjustment to divorce. The critical factor appears to be conflict between parents. When parents cooperate and minimize conflict, children do better with shared parenting/joint physical custody. If there is significant conflict between parents, however, shared parenting provides no benefits and children do no better (and no worse) than they do in sole custody. This section summarizes some of the research published in the past decade.

Joint Physical Custody -- Adolescents After Divorce, Buchanan, C., Maccoby, and Dornbusch, Harvard University Press, 1996.

A study of 517 families with children ranging in age from 10.5 years to 18 years, across a four and a half year period. Measures were: assessed depression, deviance, school effort, and school grades. Children in joint physical custody arrangements were found to have better adjustment on these measures than those in sole custody.

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This report "summarizes and evaluates the major research concerning joint custody and its impact on children's welfare." The report concludes that "The research reviewed supports the conclusion that joint custody is associated with certain favorable outcomes for children including father involvement, best interest of the child for adjustment outcomes, child support, reduced relitigation costs, and sometimes reduced parental conflict." The APA also noted that "The need for improved policy to reduce the present adversarial approach that has resulted in primarily sole maternal custody, limited father involvement and maladjustment of both children and parents is critical. Increased mediation, joint custody, and parent education are supported for this policy."

Wilkinson, Ronald Richard, "A Comparison of Children's Post-divorce Adjustment in Sole and

Joint Physical Custody Arrangements Matched for Types of Parental Conflict" Doctoral dissertation, 1992; Texas Woman's University

This study included "forty boys and girls, ages 8 to 12, in attendance at selected private secular and parochial schools in a large Southwestern metropolitan area participated, along with their middle to upper-class parents." The study compared adjustment of children in joint and sole physical custody, controlling for level of conflict between parents, to determine if parental conflict would be more detrimental to children in joint or sole custody. The author summarized findings as follows: "Overall, no significant difference between joint and sole physical custody groups was found."

Rockwell-Evans, Kim Evonne, "Parental and Children's Experiences and Adjustment in Maternal Versus Joint Custody Families " Doctoral dissertation, 1991. North Texas State U.

This study compared 21 joint custody and 21 maternal custody families, with children between the ages of 4-15.

Results showed that misbehavior and "acting out" were more common among sole custody children: "A multiple regression analysis of these data found children in joint custody families had fewer behavioral adjustment problems with externalizing behavior than children in mother custody families." "Regardless of custody arrangement, parents with low self esteem were more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems when predicting the child's overall behavioral adjustment and internalized behavior."

J. Pearson and N. Thoennes, "Custody After Divorce: Demographic and Attitudinal Patterns", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 60, 1990.

"Consistent with other studies of joint and sole custody [citations], our joint legal and residential non-custodians were decidedly more involved with their children following divorce than were non-custodians in sole custody arrangements. . . . Lastly, respondents in joint custody arrangements were more apt to perceive their ex-spouse as having a good relationship with the children and to report satisfaction with that person's performance as a parent."

". . . conflict between divorcing parents in our sample did not appear to worsen as a result of the increased demand for inter-parental cooperation and communication in joint legal or joint residential custody arrangements. To the contrary, parents with sole maternal custody reported the greatest deterioration in the relationships over time."

Glover, R. and C. Steele, "Comparing the Effects on the Child of Post-divorce Parenting Arrangements," Journal of Divorce, Vol. 12, No. 2-3 (1989).

This study evaluated children aged 6 to 15 in the areas of locus of control, self-concept, and family relationships. The children were divided into three groups: shared custody, maternal custody, and intact families. Intact family children had averaged higher than divorced family children on self-concept and father relationships, and shared custody children averaged higher the sole custody children in these areas. Intact family children had fewer least-positive responses in all areas than divorced family children, and shared custody children had fewer least-positive responses than sole custody children in all areas except mother relationship. This study indicates that, on average, a two parent intact family is the best arrangement for children, and a shared parenting arrangement is better than a sole custody arrangement, i.e., a two-parent family is better even if parents are divorced.

Ifeld, Holly Zingale "Children's perceptions of their relationship with their fathers in three family constellations: mother sole custody, joint custody and intact families" Doctoral

dissertation, U. of California, Davis 1989

This study evaluated children's perceptions of their fathers at least four years post-divorce, comparing joint custody, sole custody and intact families. The subjects were 43 latency-age children: 11 from maternal custody families, 14 from joint custody families and 18 controls from intact homes.

Results: "There was a significant difference in the perceptions of children in sole and joint custody. Joint custody children reported spending more time with their fathers in child-centered activities, activities which were considered pleasurable and important to children." And: "No differences were found as a function of custody arrangements in children's perceptions of emotional closeness to the father, acceptance by the father, or fathers's potency or activity."

Lerman, Isabel A. "Adjustment of latency age children in joint and single custody arrangements" California School of Professional Psychology, San Diego, 1989

This study evaluated 90 children, aged 7 to 12, divided equally among maternal, joint legal, and joint physical custody groups.

Results showed negative effects for sole custody: "Single custody subjects evidenced greater self-hate and perceived more rejection from their fathers than joint physical custody subjects." Conflict between parents was found to be a significant factor, which may explain the better adjustment for joint physical custody children: "Degree of inter-parental conflict was a significant predictor of child self-hate. Higher conflict was associated with greater self-hate; lower conflict was associated with lower self-hate." "Higher father-child contact was associated with better adjustment, lower self-hate, and lower perceived rejection from father; lower father-child contact was associated with poorer adjustment, higher self-hate, and higher perceived rejection from father. "

Extreme Situations

In situations with high levels of conflict, mental illness, or domestic violence, joint physical custody is no better (and no worse) than sole custody.

Surviving the Breakup, J. Wallerstein and J. Kelly; Second Chances, J. Wallerstein and S. Blakeslee; and other publications.

Judith Wallerstein and colleagues have produced many publications on a 20+ year study of 184 families that had been referred to her clinic for therapy. The parents were predominantly mentally ill, with approximately half the men and half the women "moderately disturbed or frequently incapacitated by disabling neuroses and addictions," including some who were "sometimes suicidal." An additional 20% of the women and 15% of the men were categorized as "severely disturbed." Approximately one third of the sample were considered to have "adequate psychological functioning" before divorce. Although there was a significant level of attrition, with families dropping out of the study when problems were resolved, some conclusions emerged from the remaining families. Children in joint custody situations did no better than those in sole custody, indicating that parents must be reasonably psychologically healthy for shared parenting to benefit children.

Johnston, Janet R., Marsha Kline, and Jeanne M. Tschann, "Ongoing Postdivorce Conflict: Effects on Children of Joint Custody and Frequent Access," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct. 1989).

Johnston et al. studied 100 low income families involved in ongoing custody disputes that included frequent verbal and physical aggression. Approximately one third of the children were in joint physical custody arrangements averaging 12 days per month with the less-seen parent, with the others in either mother or father sole physical custody averaging 4 days a month with the less-seen parent. The study

found that "there was no clear evidence that children are better adjusted in either custody type", and that "mean scores for the Child Behavior Checklist lie within the normal range for all custody types." Also, "there was no evidence that the clinically disturbed children were more likely to be in joint than in sole custody." However, the study did find that more frequent contact between parents in either joint or sole custody arrangements was "associated with more emotional and behavioral problems in the children."

Johnston's study indicates that shared parenting may not reduce disputes between parents in extreme high-conflict situations, but also shows that sole custody does not protect children from the effects of conflict between parents. In high conflict situations, it is probably better to reduce interaction between parents. For example, parents can pick up children from school instead of from the other parent's house.

The study did find one significant benefit from shared parenting even in these cases: "Only one parent with joint custody ceased contact with her child, whereas 12 parents of sole custody children 'dropped out'." Thus joint custody does appear to protect children from the complete loss of a parent, even in high conflict situations.

Joint Legal Custody

Although not as beneficial to children as equal shared parenting (joint physical custody), joint legal custody helps to some extent. The main benefits of joint legal custody are in reducing visitation interference and improving child support compliance.

Joint legal custody has been consistently linked with more parental involvement, higher child support compliance, and less conflict between parents. Until recently, however, it was not clear whether these benefits occurred as a result of joint legal custody, or simply because more cooperative parents chose joint custody in the first place. The 1997 study by Seltzer provides strong evidence for a cause and effect relationship between joint legal custody and the benefits associated with it.

Seltzer, J. "Father by Law: Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Non-residential Fathers Involvement with Children," NSFH Paper No. 75, Feb., 1997, U. of Wisconsin-Madison, <http://ssc.wisc.edu/cde/nsfhw/home.htm>

Seltzer used data from the National Survey of Families and Households, a survey of over 13,000 families that collected data in two waves, 1987-88 and 1992-94. Because the study included data on the quality of family relationships, it was possible to study the effects of joint legal custody while controlling from pre-separation family relationships by analyzing data on families that had separated between the survey waves.

Seltzer concluded that "Controlling for the quality of family relationships before separation and socioeconomic status, fathers with joint legal custody see their children more frequently, have more overnight visits, and pay more child support than fathers in families in which mothers have sole legal custody." She suggests that joint legal custody helps reduce visitation denial: "By clarifying that divorced fathers are 'by law' still fathers, parents' negotiations about fathers' participation in child rearing after divorce may shift from trying to resolve whether fathers will be involved in child rearing to the matter of how fathers will be involved." [emphasis in original]

Gunnoe, M.L., and S.L. Braver, "The Effects of Joint Legal Custody on Family Functioning, Controlling for Factors that Predispose a joint award," Child Development.

This study evaluated 273 families, controlling for 28 variables that influence a predisposition to agree on joint legal custody. Controlling for these factors, children in joint legal custody families had more time with their fathers and fewer adjustment and behavior problems. The custody type, however, did not affect the adjustment of fathers or mothers post-divorce, conflict between ex-spouses, or child support compliance.

Sanford Braver, "Determining the Impact of Joint Custody on Divorcing Families",

Study consisted of 378 families; some with unmatched partners, in various custody arrangements.

"... Sharlene Wolchik, Iwrin Sandler and I found in 1985 that children in joint custody had higher feelings of self-worth than children in sole maternal custody."

"Our results showed considerable benefits for joint custody, even when equating predisposing factors. After this adjustment, children in joint custody were found to be significantly better adjusted, and to exhibit less antisocial and impulsive behavior than sole custody families. Fathers also visited more, and were more involved in child care, as well as more satisfied with the divorce settlement. Mothers, however, were significantly less satisfied with the custody arrangements in joint custody families."

"When the couple disagrees initially, which is better for the family, for the father to get his preference (joint [custody]) or for the mother to get her preference (sole [custody])? We found that the groups differed significantly in terms of how much financial child support was paid: when sole custody was that arrangement despite the fathers' wishes, 80% was paid (according to what the father reported; the figure was 64% by mothers' report), while when joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference, it zoomed to almost perfect compliance (97% by fathers' report; 94% by mothers' report) . . . A similar relationship was found for fathers' contact with the child. It was significantly highest for the group in which joint custody was awarded despite the mothers' preference." "Joint custody, even when awarded despite the contrary preference of the mother, leads to more involved fathers, and almost perfect of financial child support; controlling for predisposing factors, it leads to better adjusted children. . . We believe these findings call for policy makers, in the best interest of the children, to adopt a presumption that is rebuttable for joint legal custody, that is, a judicial preference that both parents retain their right and responsibilities toward their children post divorce."

The Cult of Parenthood: A Qualitative Study of Parental Alienation

Study on how Parental Alienation Syndrome used the tactics that cults use and has some of the same impact on children.

Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements A Meta-Analytic Review

Robert Bauserman

AIDS Administration/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,

ABSTRACT

The author meta-analyzed studies comparing child adjustment in joint physical or joint legal custody with sole-custody settings, including comparisons with paternal custody and intact families where possible. Children in joint physical or legal custody were better adjusted than children in sole-custody settings, but no different from those in intact families. More positive adjustment of joint-custody children held for separate comparisons of general adjustment, family relationships, self-esteem, emotional and behavioral adjustment, and divorce-specific adjustment. Joint-custody parents reported less current and past conflict than did sole-custody parents, but this did not explain the better adjustment of joint-custody children. The results are consistent with the hypothesis that joint custody can be advantageous for children in some cases, possibly by facilitating ongoing positive involvement with both parents.

*—Research evidence has clearly demonstrated that, on average, children from divorced families are not as well adjusted as those in intact families, although this relative disadvantage does not necessarily imply clinical levels of maladjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985). Joint custody, an arrangement that involves shared legal and/or physical custody of children following divorce of their parents, has increased in popularity as an option in divorce since the 1970s, with many states now having either a preference or presumption for joint legal custody (Bender, 1994). An ongoing debate between proponents and opponents of joint custody has continued since the 1970s as well, with different researchers and authors expressing both strong opposition (e.g., Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1973; Kuehl, 1989) and strong support (e.g., Bender, 1994; Roman & Haddad, 1978). Arguments in favor of joint custody have often focused on benefits for the child of maintaining relationships with both parents. In contrast, opponents have argued that joint custody disrupts needed stability in a child's life and can lead to harm by exposing children to ongoing parental conflict.

—A variety of theoretical perspectives have been proposed to explain the links between divorce and child adjustment (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998): individual characteristics of the child that might increase vulnerability to maladjustment; the change in family composition and the possible negative effects of father absence in the typical maternal custody situation; the increased economic stress and problems in shifting from a two-parent to a one-parent household; effects of parental distress on the child; and changes in family processes such as conflict and expression of emotion. Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1996) classified factors affecting children's postdivorce adjustment into three categories: loss of a parent, interparental conflict, and diminished parenting (in which the quality of parenting from the custodial parent deteriorates, typically during the first 2 years after divorce). In an analysis of several large-scale national samples, McLanahan (1999) found that father absence due to divorce is associated with less school achievement for both boys and girls, more labor market detachment (i.e., unemployment) for boys, and early childbearing for girls. The impact of father absence seemed to be mediated by several variables, including loss of parental resources (less involvement and supervision), loss of financial resources, and loss of community resources (the broader network of social involvement, interaction, and support obtained from each parent). In a meta-analysis of 63 studies of nonresident fathers' role in children's well-being, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that authoritative parenting and feelings of closeness between father and child related to well-being. In addition to child support payments, authoritative parenting by the father was the most consistent predictor of outcomes including school achievement, externalizing (behavioral) problems, and internalizing (emotional) problems.

—Notably, joint custody (and joint physical custody in particular) is relevant to many of the issues raised by Buchanan et al. (1996), Amato and Gilbreth (1999), Hetherington et al. (1998), and McLanahan (1999). For example, ongoing and frequent access to both parents may mitigate potential effects of parental absence as seen in sole-custody

households, and access to the households and resources of both parents may reduce economic stress and disadvantage for the child. On the other hand, as critics of joint custody have noted, close ongoing contact with both parents might expose the child to ongoing conflict. Thus, research on custody and adjustment needs to examine not just differences in adjustment across different custodial settings, but also how the factors identified here may relate to any adjustment differences found. It is important to recognize that such comparisons cannot establish a causal role for joint versus sole custody in child adjustment, because such research is necessarily relational rather than experimental in nature. However, it would still be possible to identify which custody type (if any) is associated with better adjustment in different areas, and what variables appear to moderate any relationship found.

* During the past 20 years, an increasing body of research evidence on the adjustment of children in both types of custody settings has developed, and some reviewers have specifically compared child adjustment in joint- and sole-custody settings (e.g., Johnston, 1995; Twaite & Luchow, 1996). These reviewers presented varying conclusions: some argued that the research literature unequivocally supports joint custody (Bender, 1994); others argued that variables such as parental conflict are more important than custodial arrangement in determining child outcomes (Twaite & Luchow, 1996) and that joint custody is likely to be inappropriate in high-conflict situations (Johnston, 1995). Still others presented mixed findings in which no single custody arrangement can be assumed to be preferable (Kelly, 1993). These authors conducted traditional narrative literature reviews that attempt to organize and make sense of a literature by reporting on the findings of a number of relevant studies, noting significant and nonsignificant findings, and forming holistic impressions of the literature reviewed. However, such reviews are subject to a number of potential problems: selective citation of studies; reporting results consistent with the reviewer's perspective, combined with minimization or nonreporting of inconsistent results; focusing on statistical significance rather than on the magnitude of the relationship between variables; and failure to examine study characteristics as moderators of results (Johnson, 1989; Rosenthal, 1984).

* In this review, a meta-analysis of child adjustment in sole- and joint-custody situations was conducted in order to avoid some of the problems of traditional literature reviews and to integrate as much of the relevant literature as possible. Meta-analytic reviews integrate research literature in a more systematic and quantitative fashion than traditional narrative reviews (Rosenthal, 1984) by converting different statistical results into a common metric of effect size such as Cohen's (1988) *d* and systematically examining the effect of various study qualities on the magnitude of the effect.

* The goal of this review was to locate and meta-analytically integrate reports of child adjustment that directly compare children in joint-custody (legal and/or physical) and in sole-custody settings following divorce. Based on the arguments advanced in favor of joint custody (e.g., Bender, 1994), the literature demonstrating adjustment difficulties for children in sole-custody families when compared to children in intact families (e.g., Amato & Keith, 1991b; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985), and the relevance of ongoing relationships with both parents to theoretical perspectives on child adjustment in divorce (e.g., Hetherington et al., 1998), it was hypothesized that on average children in joint-custody arrangements would demonstrate better adjustment than children in sole-custody arrangements. Although the suggested hypothesis (and subsequent hypotheses) is directional, all statistical tests were based on appropriately conservative two-tailed probabilities. As noted previously, joint custody cannot be proven to be the causal factor in any such difference. However, such an outcome would be consistent with suggestions that, by providing for an ongoing, close relationship with both parents in a way not possible in sole-custody arrangements that emphasize limited visitation with the noncustodial parents, joint custody may work to overcome the difficulties for the child potentially caused by the parental absence, economic stress, socioeconomic disadvantage, and changes in family processes that might accompany divorce. Exposure to parental conflict may potentially be greater in a joint-custody setting than in a sole-custody setting, and consequently offset some of these possible benefits, but this is a concern that can be examined empirically.

* Because most sole-custody arrangements are maternal rather than paternal custody, the primary focus of the review was comparison of joint-custody samples with primarily or exclusively sole maternal custody samples. In addition, some studies also included separate paternal custody groups or intact family groups. These groups were used to conduct secondary meta-analyses comparing paternal custody and joint-custody children, and intact-family and joint-custody children. Based on the reasoning that joint custody is more beneficial than harmful because it provides a higher degree of ongoing support and resources from both parents than other custody arrangements, it was hypothesized that joint-custody children would be relatively better adjusted than paternal custody children. It was further hypothesized that joint-custody and intact-family children would be relatively equal in level of adjustment because both groups are

A secondary goal of the current review was to examine how theoretically relevant characteristics of participant populations and of studies might moderate the relationship between custody arrangements and outcomes. For example, some critics of joint custody have expressed concern that this arrangement will expose children to ongoing parental conflict, resulting in more stress and adjustment problems. Thus, wherever possible joint-custody and sole-custody groups were compared on levels of conflict between parents either now or in the past, and conflict level was examined as a moderator of adjustment differences. Although interparental conflict might reduce potential benefits, joint-custody parents may experience lower levels of conflict at the time of divorce than sole-custody parents, which allows them to enter into joint-custody arrangements to begin with. The potential confounding role of conflict is also considered.

Other researchers have claimed that children in sole-custody arrangements are better adjusted when living with the same-sex than with the opposite-sex parent (e.g., Warshak, 1986), a variation of the family-composition perspective on the effects of divorce. Given that most sole-custody arrangements involve maternal custody, boys might therefore show more benefit than girls in a comparison of joint and maternal custody. Thus, one variable coded as a potential moderator was the proportion of boys in each study's sole-custody and joint-custody groups. It was hypothesized that the benefits of ongoing involvement with both parents would be robust, such that better adjustment for joint-custody children would be found even when controlling for a variety of participant and study characteristics as potential moderators.

Method

Sample of Studies

Studies were located through (a) electronic databases, including PsycINFO, Sociofile, and *Dissertation Abstracts International*, and (b) reference lists of relevant studies. Both narrowly focused searches (with the term "joint custody") and broader searches (combining the terms "custody" and "adjustment") were performed. The electronic databases were searched from the earliest available dates through December 1998. *Dissertation Abstracts International* was searched in an effort to incorporate as many unpublished findings as possible. Contacts with researchers in the field identified an additional study, which has since been published (Gunnée & Braver, 2001).

To be included in this review, a study had to include groups of children living in joint legal or physical custody arrangements and in maternal or sole-custody arrangements, and had to report the statistical outcome of some test comparing psychological or behavioral adjustment between the groups. Studies that reported only qualitative descriptions of different groups, or that reported the adjustment of a joint-custody group without a sole-custody comparison group (e.g., Steinman, 1981), were therefore excluded. Similarly, studies that included both sole- and joint-custody children, and some measure of adjustment, were excluded if they did not provide any information (statistics or *p* values) on direct comparisons of the sole- and joint-custody groups (e.g., Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989).

Coding of Studies

For each study, the following information was coded: (a) statistics provided on adjustment for sole-custody and joint-custody children (and paternal custody and intact-family children, if included), including group sample sizes, means and standard deviations, *t* tests, *F* tests, correlations, and proportions; (b) the specific definition of joint custody used in the study (joint physical, joint legal, or undefined); (c) type of adjustment measure (described further below); (d) by whom the adjustment measure was completed; (e) ages of each group of children at the time of parental separation or divorce; (f) current ages (at time of study) of each group of children; (g) the proportion of boys in the joint-custody group and in the sole-custody group; (h) proportion of custodial mothers in the sole-custody group (usually 1.0, but less in some cases where authors did not report separate results for maternal and paternal sole-custody groups); (i) published versus unpublished status; (j) sex of first author, coded from the first name of the author; (k) sample source; (l) date of publication; (m) parental conflict in the past; and (n) parental conflict now.

Most studies included more than one codable measure of adjustment, which often represented conceptually different types of adjustment and were completed by different individuals. Effect sizes were calculated for each result, referred

to here as *measure-level* effect sizes. Although this procedure meant that not all effect sizes were independent of one another, it allowed separate meta-analyses on the basis of type of adjustment measure (e.g., self-esteem) and the individual (e.g., child or parent) who completed the measure. For each study with more than one measure-level effect size, all effect sizes were also averaged to obtain a single effect size, referred to here as *study-level* effect size (Kosenthal, 1984). Although this procedure meant that disparate measures might be averaged for some studies, it also meant that each effect size represented an independent study. This procedure allowed examination of study qualities, such as published versus unpublished status or sex of author, as potential moderators of effects. (The coding of some specific qualities is described in the following.) A total of 140 measure-level effect sizes were coded for the joint-custody and maternal custody comparisons.

For eight of the studies that were eventually included, statistics were provided that allowed calculation of effect sizes for some of the measures used, but not for others for which comparisons were reported to be nonsignificant. Rather than selectively include measures from these studies, effect sizes for these measures were set equal to zero and included in the measure-level meta-analyses and in calculation of the study-level effect sizes. This procedure provides a conservative and unbiased way to include these measures that does not favor either custody arrangement. As a result, a total of nine effect sizes estimated to be zero were included.

Definition of Joint Custody

The term *joint custody* can refer to either shared physical custody, with children spending equal or substantial amounts of time with both parents, or shared legal custody, with primary residence often remaining with one parent. Joint physical custody clearly implies ongoing close contact with both parents. However, joint legal custody implies shared decision making by the parents and ongoing, active involvement of the nonresidential parent in the child's life, even if residential custody remains primarily with one parent. Rather than exclude one form or the other from the current review, studies based on either joint physical or joint legal custody were included; study definitions were coded as "joint physical" or "joint legal" so that comparisons on the basis of definition would be possible. In 64% of the studies ($n = 21$), joint custody was defined specifically on the basis of time spent with each parent. Typically this meant at least 25% of the child's or adolescent's time was spent with each parent; schedules could and did vary widely from subject to subject and study to study, but in all of these cases involved a substantial proportion of time actually spent living with each parent. In an additional 18% of studies ($n = 6$), joint custody was self-defined by parents or was left undefined in the report of the study. For 12% of the studies ($n = 4$), joint custody groups combined joint legal and joint physical custody. Two studies (Isaacs, Leon, & Kline, 1987; Lerman, 1989) included separate joint physical custody and joint legal custody groups. However, there was only one sole-custody comparison group within each study, so comparisons of joint physical versus sole custody and joint legal versus sole custody were not independent within each study. In these two cases, measure-level and study-level effect sizes were calculated based on sole-custody comparisons with both the joint physical and joint legal groups. Only the joint physical/sole-custody comparisons were used in later analyses of measure-level effect sizes. Study-level effect sizes were computed for sole-custody comparisons with both the joint physical and joint legal groups in each study, and study-level comparisons of adjustment in joint and sole custody were computed using both (a) joint physical/sole-custody comparisons only, and (b) joint physical and joint legal comparisons with sole custody. For custody definition, studies were dummy-coded with "1" for time-based joint physical custody, and "2" for joint legal custody or samples that left joint custody undefined or combined the two types.

Types of Adjustment Measures

Because of the possibility that differences between sole and joint custody children might be greater on some dimensions of adjustment (e.g., family relations) than others (e.g., measures of general adjustment), measures were categorized into the following groups: general adjustment, emotional adjustment, behavioral adjustment, self-esteem, family relations, academic performance, and divorce-specific adjustment.

General adjustment.

This category included results reported for broad-based measures of adjustment covering a range of behavioral and emotional problems, including the Child Symptom Checklist; the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983); the Personality Inventory for Children, Adjustment subscale (Wirt, Lachar, Klinedienst, & Seat, 1984); the California Test of Personality (California Test Bureau, 1950); the Health Resources Inventory (Gesten,

1976); the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (Mercer, 1979, ch. 15); the Louisville Behavior Checklist (Miller, 1977); and scales or items created by the authors included in the meta-analysis.

Behavioral adjustment.

This category included measures specifically assessing behavioral problems, including the Conduct Disorder subscale of the Adolescent Multiphasic Personality Inventory (*MPI*; Duthie, 1985); the Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1979); the Externalizing subscale of the CBCL (when scale scores for the CBCL were reported rather than total scores), the Externalizing subscale of the Youth Self-Report Inventory (Achenbach, 1991), and various author-created scales for rating behavioral problems.

Emotional adjustment.

This category included measures intended to assess emotional symptoms and reactions, including the Neuroticism subscale of the Adolescent MPI; the Internalizing subscale from the CBCL; the Children's Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1981); the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Inventory (Reynolds & Richmond, 1985); the Children's Social Desirability Questionnaire (Crandall, Crandall, & Katkovsky, 1965); the Draw-A-Person Test (Koppitz, 1966); the Differential Emotions Scale (Boyle, 1984); the House-Tree-Person Test (Buck, 1977); Locus of Control (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973); the Internalizing subscale of the Youth Self-Report Inventory; and various author-written items related to emotional problems and adjustment.

Self-esteem.

This category included the California Attitude Survey; the Self-Esteem subscale of the Children's Personality Questionnaire (R. Porter & Cattell, 1968); the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967); the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory; the Inferred Self-Concept Scale (Hughes, 1984); the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982); the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers, 1984; Piers & Harris, 1964); the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965); and author-written items or composites of self-esteem items.

Family relations.

This category included the Child Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965); items from the Cornell Parent Behavior Inventory (Devereaux, Bronfenbrenner, & Suci, 1962); the Draw-A-Family Test (Isaacs et al., 1987); the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES; Olson, 1986); the Family Relations Test (Anthony & Bene, 1957); the Kinetic Family Drawings Test (Burns & Kaufman, 1970); the Kvebaek Family Sculpture Test (Cromwell, Fournier, & Kveback, 1980); the Loyalty Conflict Assessment Test (Shiller, 1986); the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 1980); the Stepfamily Adjustment Scale (Crosbie-Burnett, 1991); and various author-created scales.

Academic/scholastic.

This category included one measure specific to classroom behavior, the Classroom Adjustment Rating Scale (Lorion, 1975), and measures related to school performance or intelligence such as grade-point average, IQ, and school attendance.

Divorce-specific.

This category included the Children's Attitudes Toward Parental Separation Inventory (CAPSI; Berg, 1982); Children's Beliefs about Parental Divorce (CBAPD; Kurdek & Berg, 1987); the Structured Divorce Questionnaire (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980); the Divorce Experiences Scale for Children (Wolchik, Braver, & Sandler, 1985), and various author-written items specifically concerning adjustment to the divorce, such as parental ratings of whether the child was harmed by or benefited from the divorce, and positive versus negative experiences in the divorce.

Sample Source

There were five different types of sample sources identified. First were court and divorce records, in which

researchers identified joint-custody families by examining court records of divorce and custody proceedings in specific jurisdictions. Second were convenience samples, in which researchers identified and recruited participants through such means as newspaper and media advertisements, word of mouth, and personal contacts. Third were school-based samples, in which participants were recruited within particular schools or school systems. Fourth were national samples (only one, Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992). And finally, clinical samples of families undergoing counseling or other mental health services related to the divorce (only two, Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989; Walker, 1985).

Conflict

Samples were also coded for measures of current conflict between parents (conflict now) and past conflict between parents (conflict then). Past conflict typically involved assessments of conflict during the marriage or around the time of separation. Measures of current conflict were coded from 14 studies and included such measures as the Straus Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979); the O'Leary-Porter Overt Hostility Scale (B. Porter & O'Leary, 1980); Ahrons's scales for various dimensions of parental conflict, communication, and support (Ahrons, 1979, 1981, 1983); and various author-created items or scales for parents (and sometimes children) to report on such constructs as discord, hostility, cooperation, and conflict over custody or other issues. Measures of past conflict were coded from 5 studies and included the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959); the O'Leary-Porter Overt-Hostility Scale; the Straus Conflict Tactics Scale; and various author-created items or scales for parents or children to rate parental conflict in the past.

Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using DSTAT software for meta-analysis (Johnson, 1989). This program uses the Hedges and Olkin (1985) methods for meta-analysis for most calculations. For modeling of study qualities that are continuous rather than categorical variables, however, the program uses Rosenthal's (1984) techniques. This difference is reflected in the statistics reported for modeling of study qualities.

Results

Study Characteristics

A total of 33 studies, 11 published and 22 unpublished, were included (21 of the unpublished studies were doctoral dissertations). The 33 studies contributed a total of 140 measure-level effect sizes. These studies dated from 1982 to 1999. The combined sample size across studies was 1,846 sole-custody and 814 joint-custody children. Over one third ($n = 12$) were convenience samples drawn from various sources such as child-care centers, single-parent groups, and word of mouth. Court records of divorce filings and litigation were the source of 11 samples: 6 were drawn from school populations; 2 from clinical samples; 1 from highly conflicted parents (Johnston et al., 1989); 1 from parents seeking counseling at a social services agency (Walker, 1985); and 1 from a national telephone survey (Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992). Only 6 had a male first author, whereas 26 had a female first author (author sex could not be determined for one study, due to an ambiguous name; see Table 1).

Adjustment in Joint Versus Sole Custody

First, the study-level effect sizes for joint versus sole custody were analyzed (this analysis included only the joint physical custody effects for Isaacs et al., 1987, and Lerman, 1989, so there was only one effect size for every study). Across the study-level effect sizes, joint-custody children scored significantly higher on adjustment measures than sole-custody children, $d = .23$ ($SD = .27$, 95% confidence interval (CI) = .14-.32), corresponding to an r of .114. According to the guidelines described by Cohen (1988), this effect size is slightly greater than what would be considered a small effect size ($d = .20$). The effect sizes were not significantly heterogeneous, $Q(32) = 27.67$, $p = .62$, meaning that they were statistically consistent across studies. As noted earlier, the sole-custody groups were either exclusively maternal custody or primarily maternal custody with a small minority of paternal custody cases; a separate analysis (see the following) was conducted to compare joint and paternal custody children.

A second overall analysis was conducted using both the joint legal and joint physical samples from Isaacs et al. (1987) and Lerman (1989), so each of these studies contributed two effect sizes. As noted previously, each of these

studies had only one sole-custody comparison group, so the study-level effect sizes for joint physical and joint legal custody were not truly independent of each other. Results were nearly identical to the first analysis, $d = .26$ ($SD = .28$, 95% CI = .17–.34), and effect sizes were not heterogenous, $Q(34) = 32.06$, $p = .86$.

Because joint physical and joint legal custody may differ greatly in terms of time spent with each parent (with only the former clearly involving substantial amounts of time spent living with each parent), separate study-level analyses were conducted to compare joint physical custody and joint legal custody groups to sole-custody groups. In both cases, the joint-custody groups were better adjusted. For joint physical custody versus sole custody ($n = 20$ studies), $d = .29$ ($SD = .30$, 95% CI = .14–.42), and effect sizes were not significantly heterogenous, $Q(19) = 18.80$, $p = .53$. For joint legal custody versus sole custody ($n = 15$ studies, including the joint legal samples from Isaacs et al., 1987, and Lerman, 1989), $d = .22$ ($SD = .24$, 95% CI = .10–.34), and effect sizes were again not significantly heterogenous, $Q(14) = 12.50$, $p = .64$. Without Isaacs et al. and Lerman, the effect size for the joint legal comparison was smaller but still significant, $d = .15$ ($SD = .21$, 95% CI = .01–.28), $Q(12) = 6.40$, $p = .93$. A direct contrast of the mean effect sizes for joint physical and joint legal samples revealed that they did not significantly differ from each other either including or excluding the Isaacs et al. and Lerman samples, $\chi^2 = 0.69$, $p = .40$, and $\chi^2 = 2.50$, $p = .12$, respectively. Based on these findings, the joint physical and joint legal custody comparisons to sole custody were combined for all further analyses.

Comparisons Based on Study-Level Effect Sizes

* Modeling of both categorical and continuous study qualities was performed to determine whether specific qualities of studies or of samples moderated the difference between sole and joint custody. Although effect sizes were not significantly heterogenous, this does not necessarily disallow examination of possible moderators of effect sizes. Rosenthal (1995) stated that contrasts can and should be computed among obtained effect sizes regardless of heterogeneity, because they may still reveal significant results and provide useful information. These analyses included only the joint physical custody effect size for Isaacs et al. (1987) and Lerman (1989), so each study was represented only by a single effect size.

Published and unpublished studies did not differ significantly in effect sizes, $QB(1) = 0.09$, $p = .76$. Sex of first author also did not moderate effect sizes, $QB(1) = 0.19$, $p = .66$. The proportions of boys in sole-custody groups and in joint-custody groups were not separately related to effect sizes, $Z = 1.39$, $p = .17$, and $Z = 1.32$, $p = .19$, respectively. Age at time of separation/divorce for sole-custody and joint-custody groups also did not relate to effect sizes, $Z = 0.31$, $p = .75$, and $Z = 0.34$, $p = .74$, respectively; neither did current age of child/adolescent for sole-custody and joint-custody groups, $Z = -0.44$, $p = .66$ and $Z = -0.33$, $p = .74$, respectively. The proportion of mothers in the sole-custody groups also did not affect the relationship between custody and adjustment, $Z = 0.59$, $p = .55$.

† Importantly, sample source was unrelated to effect sizes, $QB(4) = 8.15$, $p = .09$ (studies not reporting sample source were excluded from this analysis). Effect sizes in each of the categories with more than one effect size (court, school, and convenience samples) were not significantly heterogenous (only the national sample category had a single effect size; see Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992, Table 1). When examined separately, overall effect sizes were significantly different from zero for convenience samples, $d = .28$ ($SD = .27$, 95% CI = .11–.45); samples based on court records, $d = .15$ ($SD = .08$, 95% CI = .02–.29); and samples obtained from in-school students, $d = .47$ ($SD = .29$, 95% CI = .24–.70). The combined effect size for the two clinical samples did not differ from zero, $d = .18$ ($SD = .49$, 95% CI = -.19–.56), and the single national sample had a negative effect size, indicating better adjustment for sole-custody children.

Comparisons Based on Measure-Level Effect Sizes

* Measure-level effect sizes were used for meta-analysis of the effects of type of adjustment measure and identity of the person evaluating the child's adjustment. The measure-level effect sizes obtained for this analysis are displayed in stem-and-leaf format in the Appendix.

Type of adjustment measure.

* Type of measure did not significantly moderate effect sizes, $QB(6) = 4.85$, $p = .56$. For all categories of adjustment except academic adjustment, joint-custody children were better adjusted than sole-custody children: for general (broad) measures of adjustment ($n = 24$), $d = .29$ ($SD = .41$, 95% CI = .18–.41); for family relations ($n = 41$), $d = .23$ ($SD = .42$,

95% CI = .14-.32); for self-esteem ($n = 22$), $d = .30$ ($SD = .47$, 95% CI = .17-.43); for emotional adjustment ($n = 20$), $d = .21$ ($SD = .38$, 95% CI = .11-.32); for behavioral adjustment ($n = 12$), $d = .25$ ($SD = .18$, 95% CI = .12-.38); and for divorce-specific adjustment ($n = 14$), $d = .13$ ($SD = .42$, 95% CI = .01-.25).

For several categories of adjustment measures, the homogeneity statistic Q indicated that the effect sizes were significantly heterogenous. The largest outlier for each of these categories was removed and the homogeneity rechecked; the procedure was repeated if effect sizes remained nonhomogenous. The DSTAT program identifies the largest outlier as that effect size which, if removed, would reduce the homogeneity statistic Q by the largest amount. Measures of general adjustment were rendered homogenous by removal of two outliers, resulting in an adjusted $d = .29$ (95% CI = .18-.41). Family adjustment effect sizes were homogenous after removal of one outlier, adjusted $d = .19$ (95% CI = .09-.28). Academic-adjustment effects also were homogenous after removal of a single outlier, adjusted $d = .06$ (95% CI = -.17-.30), as were divorce-specific effects, adjusted $d = .19$ (95% CI = .07-.32).

Person completing measure.

The identity of the person completing the adjustment measure did not significantly moderate effect sizes, $QB(5) = 6.74$, $p = .24$. For all categories of persons completing the adjustment measure, joint custody children were better adjusted than sole-custody children, with the 95% confidence interval excluding zero: for child-completed measures ($n = 81$), $d = .19$ ($SD = .44$, 95% CI = .13-.25); for mother-completed measures ($n = 18$), $d = .32$ ($SD = .39$, 95% CI = .20-.45); for father-completed measures ($n = 17$), $d = .30$ ($SD = .18$, 95% CI = .12-.48); for measures completed by an unspecified parent ($n = 17$), $d = .19$ ($SD = .31$, 95% CI = .07-.31); for teacher-completed measures ($n = 9$), $d = .40$ ($SD = .37$, 95% CI = .16-.64); and for measures completed by clinicians ($n = 7$), $d = .27$ ($SD = .45$, 95% CI = .07-.46).

The Role of Conflict

Effect sizes were calculated comparing joint-custody and sole-custody groups on the basis of conflict now ($n = 14$ studies) and conflict in the past ($n = 5$ studies). The remaining studies did not report conflict data. For current conflict, joint-custody groups reported significantly less across the 14 studies, $d = .24$ ($SD = .58$, 95% CI = .11-.37). For past conflict, joint-custody groups again reported less across the 5 studies, $d = .33$ ($SD = .20$, 95% CI = .10-.55). Next, both past and current conflict were tested as moderators of the adjustment difference between joint and sole custody. Neither was a significant predictor of the joint-custody advantage in adjustment (for past conflict, $Z = 0.505$, $p = .61$; for current conflict, $Z = 1.349$, $p = .18$). One problem that may have obscured a potential relationship was the relatively small proportion of studies that actually provided codable data on group differences in conflict; for past conflict in particular, only 5 studies allowed such a comparison.

Adjustment in Joint Versus Paternal Custody

A total of 8 studies included paternal custody groups composed entirely of custodial fathers (Granite, 1985; Hendrickson, 1991; Johnston et al., 1989; Luepnitz, 1982; Mensink, 1987; Spence, 1992; Warren, 1983; Welsh-Osga, 1982). Separate groups of custodial mothers from these studies were included in the joint- versus sole-custody comparisons already examined. Because of the relatively small number of samples, analyses were conducted based on study-level effect sizes only, and study qualities were not analyzed as moderators of this comparison. As with sole custody, these effect sizes were obtained by calculating measure-level effect sizes and then averaging for each study (there were a total of 40 effect sizes across all 8 studies). Overall, differences in adjustment were in the direction of better adjustment for joint-custody children, $d = .20$, but this difference was nonsignificant (95% CI = -.06-.46). Effect sizes were not significantly heterogenous, $Q(7) = 5.26$, $p = .63$.

Adjustment in Joint Custody Versus Intact Families

A total of 8 studies compared joint-custody children with intact-family children, with 45 effect sizes (Glover & Steele, 1989; Hendrickson, 1991; Ilfeld, 1989; Karp, 1982; Mensink, 1987; Pojman, 1981; Spence, 1992; Welsh-Osga, 1982). Again, average effect sizes were computed for each study and comparisons were based on the study-level effects. As with the joint-custody/paternal custody comparison, study qualities were not analyzed as moderators of the adjustment comparisons. There was no difference between joint-custody and intact-family children, $d = -.0002$ (95% CI = -.027-.027). Again, the effect sizes were not significantly heterogenous, $Q(7) = 5.34$, $p = .62$.

Discussion

Based on these results, children in joint custody are better adjusted, across multiple types of measures, than children in sole (primarily maternal) custody. This difference is found with both joint legal and joint physical custody and appears robust, remaining significant even when testing various categorical and continuous qualities of the research studies as moderators. For measure-level effect sizes, the effect sizes do not significantly differ across types of adjustment measures. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that joint custody can be beneficial to children in a wide range of family, emotional, behavioral, and academic domains. Similarly, Amato and Gilbreth's (1999) meta-analysis of nonresident father involvement showed that closeness to the father and authoritative parenting by the father were positively associated with behavioral adjustment, emotional adjustment, and school achievement. Joint-custody children showed better adjustment in parental relations and spent significant amounts of time with the father, allowing more opportunity for authoritative parenting. The findings for joint legal custody samples indicate that children do not actually need to be in joint *physical* custody to show better adjustment, but it is important to note that joint legal custody children typically spent a substantial amount of time with the father as well. Importantly, a causal role for joint custody cannot be demonstrated because of the correlational nature of all research in this area.

—The effect size did not significantly vary according to the identity of the person completing the adjustment measure, indicating that on average mothers, fathers, children, teachers, and clinicians, all rated child adjustment as better in joint-custody settings. The ratings by mothers are notable because mothers might perceive joint custody as a loss of expected control as primary custodians and be less likely to perceive children as benefiting. Some authors have claimed that mothers are the primary “losers” in joint-custody situations (Kuchl, 1989). However, mothers appear just as likely as other evaluators to perceive joint custody as beneficial to their children's adjustment.

—For study-level effect sizes, the better adjustment in joint custody did not vary according to the age of the children in either the sole- or joint-custody groups. Although the period from early childhood through adolescence is marked by many developmental tasks and changes, it may be that ongoing positive involvement with both parents at any of these ages can prove beneficial. The effect sizes also did not significantly vary according to characteristics of the study, such as unpublished versus published status. Unlike research literature in some areas, the literature on child adjustment in different custody arrangements does not show a bias toward larger effect sizes in published studies.

—Notably, the source of the sample (court, convenience, or school-based) did not moderate effect sizes either. The effect size for the single national sample (Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992) was not significantly different from zero, but this telephone survey included only three questions about parent–child relationships only. The two clinical samples also did not show an advantage for joint custody, but at least one of these (Johnston et al., 1989) was specifically selected for unusually high levels of parental conflict. Further research with a variety of sample types, especially national samples if possible, is clearly needed.

—Given the relevance of parental conflict to child adjustment, the fact that lesser conflict in joint-custody groups did not significantly predict the better adjustment of children in joint custody may seem puzzling. The result may be an artifact of the small amount of variance found on this measure. Effect sizes for joint-custody/sole-custody conflict comparisons tended to be small, as shown previously, so the small differences found when comparing groups may have obscured a genuine relationship between parental conflict and child adjustment within groups. For past conflict, the small number of studies where such a comparison was possible ($n = 5$) may also have limited power to detect a significant relationship. Future research on custody and adjustment should measure, and statistically control for, the effects of level of parental conflict.

—It is also surprising that the majority of the studies reviewed did not attempt to statistically control for parental conflict levels, or even directly compare levels of conflict between joint- and sole-custody parents. In those studies that did examine conflict, joint-custody couples reported less conflict at the time of separation or divorce. This is consistent with the argument that joint-custody couples are self-selected for low conflict and that better adjustment for their children may reflect this lack of conflict; parental conflict remains an important confound in research comparing adjustment in different custody settings. However, some research that has controlled for preexisting levels of conflict continues to show an advantage for child adjustment in joint custody (Gunnore & Braver, 2001). The fact that joint-custody couples also reported less current conflict is important because of the concern that joint custody can be harmful by exposing children to ongoing parental conflict. In fact, it was the sole-custody parents who reported higher levels of current conflict.

It is also possible that direct comparisons of conflict between joint- and sole-custody parents may not be especially meaningful. King and Heard (1999) analyzed the relationships between father contact, parental conflict, and mother satisfaction in divorced families and found no simple, direct relationship among these variables. Conflict was highest at middle levels of visitation and lower when father contact was very high (as in joint physical custody) or very low.

Mother satisfaction was higher at the most and least frequent levels of visitation, and highest with high levels of paternal contact and low levels of conflict. Conflict did not moderate or mediate the relationship between father contact and mother satisfaction. King and Heard argue that some mothers may be grateful for ongoing father contact even if some conflict occurs. Low conflict could signal either good parental relations or very little or no father contact (due to maternal desires, father withdrawal, etc.).

The effect size indicating better adjustment of joint-custody versus paternal custody children was statistically nonsignificant, failing to support the hypothesis of better adjustment for joint-custody children. However, the effect was almost the same in magnitude as the effect size favoring joint over maternal/sole custody. With only 8 studies for the joint versus paternal comparison, but 33 for the broader joint- versus sole-custody comparison, lack of statistical power may have been a problem. Given the relatively small magnitude of the apparent effect size, if joint-custody and paternal custody children really do differ in adjustment, more studies with larger samples may be needed to detect the effect at the level of statistical significance.

As hypothesized, joint custody and intact family children did not differ in adjustment. This finding is consistent with the argument made by some researchers that joint custody is beneficial because it provides the child with ongoing contact with both parents. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, selection bias cannot be ruled out. Parents who have better relationships prior to, or during, the divorce process may self-select into joint custody, such that quality of parental relationship is confounded with custody status. The lower level of conflict in joint-custody families, relative to sole-custody families, is consistent with this alternative hypothesis. Further research that controls for parental conflict prior to, during, and after divorce may be the only practical way to compensate for this possibility. Another possibility for controlling selection bias might be separate comparisons of sole custody with voluntary and court-imposed joint custody.

Implications for Application and Public Policy

A major shortcoming of many of the studies reviewed was inadequate reporting of statistical results; many did not provide basic information on means and standard deviations of adjustment measures in the different custody groups, even when *t* tests or other statistical tests were reported and indicated significant differences. In some cases where differences were reported to be nonsignificant, means were reported but no standard deviations, making it necessary to estimate standard deviations from published norms for the measures used. Some studies failed to report any useful statistics at all, simply stating that there were no significant differences between groups (e.g., Ilfeld, 1989), which required that effect sizes be set to zero to allow inclusion of the study. Future researchers need to report statistical findings more carefully to make sure their results are useful for quantitative as well as qualitative reviews.

Larger sample sizes would also be valuable in future research. The effect size favoring joint custody in the current meta-analysis ($d = .23$) is just above what Cohen (1988) labeled a small effect size. Statistical significance is a function of both the effect size, or magnitude, of the phenomenon being studied and the sample size used in the research. Thus, the small size of many of the joint- (and sole-) custody groups in the research to date increases the risk of Type II error (failure to detect real differences). Of the 33 studies included in the meta-analysis, 23 had joint-custody groups and 16 had sole-custody groups with fewer than 30 participants. Especially in studies involving relatively small numbers of participants, researchers should report basic data for each group on each adjustment measure to help reviewers assess the magnitude of effects.

A further need exists for longitudinal research to assess the relative advantage of joint over sole custody across time. More follow-up studies reporting on the same sample over time, beyond adolescence and into adulthood, are needed. In general, researchers have found that as adults, children from divorced family backgrounds continue to have more difficulties than those from intact-family backgrounds (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Comparison of college or community samples of adults from joint- versus sole-custody backgrounds would be especially useful in determining whether joint-custody benefits extend into adulthood, because most of the research to date has been limited to convenience samples or samples from court records.